PEPOSE SANTIAGO SMITH BELL

Spencer & LOCKE 2

SEQUEL TO THE
THE MIKE WIERINGO COMIC BOOK INDUSTRY AWARDS
'Ring!
NOMINEE
CAN SPENCER AND LOCKE SURVIVE... THE DEADLY AIM OF ROACH RILEY?!

PREVIOUSLY IN

Spencer & LOCKE

The product of a brutally abusive childhood, there's only one friend Detective Locke trusts to help him solve the most harrowing of crimes: his imaginary talking panther, Spencer.

Following the murder of his childhood sweetheart, schoolteacher Sophie Jenkins, Spencer and Locke returned home to their old neighborhood to bring her killer to justice.

But Spencer and Locke's investigation drew the ire of the vicious drug syndicate led by Locke's crime boss father, Augustus, who took Sophie's daughter Hero as collateral.

Facing a gauntlet of foes, Locke was forced to confront his past, such as his guilt for killing his mother in self-defense.

Confronting Augustus in a deadly shootout, Locke learned the stunning truth: that Augustus did not kill Sophie, but she was instead his drug courier at the school, killed by her boss Principal Scabtree after her illicit business was found.

Shaken by this newfound knowledge, Spencer and Locke arrested Scabtree, choosing to live with their scars after learning that Hero was secretly Locke's daughter.

You'd think that would be a happy ending for these unlikely heroes. But not all scars heal—and there are some wounds that only get worse with time...

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Spencer & LOCKE 2 1

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CHAPTER ONE

Roach Riley
ROACH! YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO BE ON K.P. DUTY AN HOUR AGO!
NOW WHY DON'T I SEE YOU PEELING POTATOES, PRIVATE?!
AMMO
AH, C'MON, MAJOR-- DO YOU REALLY NEED ANY MORE HEAVY STARCHES IN YOUR LIFE?
YOU THINK YOU'RE A COMEDIAN, RILEY?!
LET'S SEE HOW FUNNY YOU ARE WITH MY BOOT STRAIGHT UP YOUR--
FRAKOW
BASE?! DO YOU COPY?!
WE HAVE MAJOR CASUALTIES AND REQUEST IMMEDIATE EVAC!
BRT
MAJOR?
BASE?! DO YOU READ?!
OH GOD...
KNOW
CAN ANYBODY HEAR ME?!

War.

They say it changes people.

But they're wrong.

War doesn't change anyone.

It just shows what we are underneath.

TELL ME WHAT YOU SEE.
HOME.
AND THIS?
FAMILY.
AND WHAT ABOUT THIS?
WHAT DO YOU SEE HERE?
NOTHING.
I SEE NOTHING AT ALL.

YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO DO BETTER THAN THAT IF YOU EVER WANT TO SEE YOUR BADGE AGAIN, DETECTIVE. OR YOUR DAUGHTER.
BECAUSE A CATASTROPHIC CAR CHASE AND A WAREHOUSE FULL OF DEAD CRIMINALS DOESN'T LOOK GOOD FOR A CUSTODY HEARING...LET ALONE INTERNAL AFFAIRS.
"WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO SAY FOR YOURSELF?"
YOU CAN'T SMOKE IN HERE.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT--IT'S THERAPEUTIC.
FINE. I CAN SEE WE'RE NOT GETTING ANYWHERE TODAY.
JUST ANSWER ME ONE THING, DETECTIVE LOCKE--WHY DIDN'T YOU AT LEAST CALL FOR BACKUP?

Spencer & LOCKE
DIDN'T NEED IT.
PRISONERS OF WAR
WRITTEN BY DAVID PEPOSE
ART BY JORGE SANTIAGO JR.
COLORS BY JASEN SMITH
LETTERS BY COLIN BELL

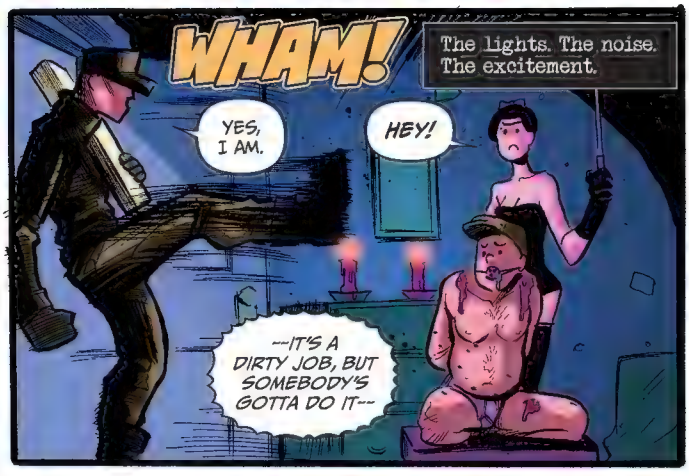
DOES IT EVER DEPRESS YOU TO LOOK UP AT THE STARS AND REALIZE HOW INSIGNIFICANT WE ARE?
WHENEVER THAT HAPPENS, I JUST REMIND MYSELF WE'LL ALL BE CONSUMED BY THE SUN SOONER OR LATER.
WOW. LEAVE IT TO A PANTHER TO MAKE EXISTENTIAL DREAD EVEN MORE IMMEDIATE.
Spencer's been my best friend for as long as I can remember.
Sure, he's a seven-foot talking panther--but you gotta try harder than that to raise an eyebrow in this town.
YOU WANNA HEAR SOMETHING I LEARNED AT THE PYRAMIDS OF EGYPT?
SERIOUSLY? YOU'VE NEVER EVEN LEFT THE STATE.
YEAH, WHATEVER-- THERE'S A POINT I'M GETTING AT.
"CATS WEREN'T DOMESTICATED THEN. WE WERE WORSHIPPED-- EXALTED BY THE PHARAOHS THEMSELVES. AND YOU KNOW WHY CATS WERE SO REVERED?"
But Spencer's changed lately. He's angrier. Territorial. Restless.
BECAUSE WE'D FIND THE VERMIN AND END THEM.
WE'RE HUNTERS, LOCKE--IT'S WHAT WE WERE BORN TO DO. WE NEED TO BE BACK ON THE STREETS.
Maybe it's true what they say. You can take the cat out of the jungle...
WE CAN'T, SPENCE-- YOU KNOW WHAT THE CHIEF SAID. WE GOTTA STAY LOW-PROFILE TILL THE HEARING.
YEAH, RIGHT-- "LOW-PROFILE." YOU CAN LIE TO YOURSELF, LOCKE--BUT YOU CAN'T LIE TO ME.
But can you ever really take the jungle out of the cat?
LOCKE?
YOU BETTER DO SOMETHING SOON... 'CAUSE YOU'RE NEVER GONNA GET HERO BACK IF YOU FALL APART AT THE SEAMS...

Melinda Mercury, Star Reporter.
WHO ARE YOU TALKING TO?
The only thing keener than her nose for a story is her taste in damaged people.
She's been good to me. Better than I deserve.
LOCKE?
Just two lost souls drifting through the darkness.
I...
I want to tell her everything.
NO ONE.
JUST TALKING TO MYSELF.
But we all have our secrets.

--TEMPERATURES ARE REACHING RECORD HIGHS THIS WEEK, AS THE CITY BRACES ITSELF FOR ONE BRUTAL SUMMER--
LIVE NUDES
I've seen things.
MARRIAGE COUNSELING
XXX STARRING PEEN DIESEL

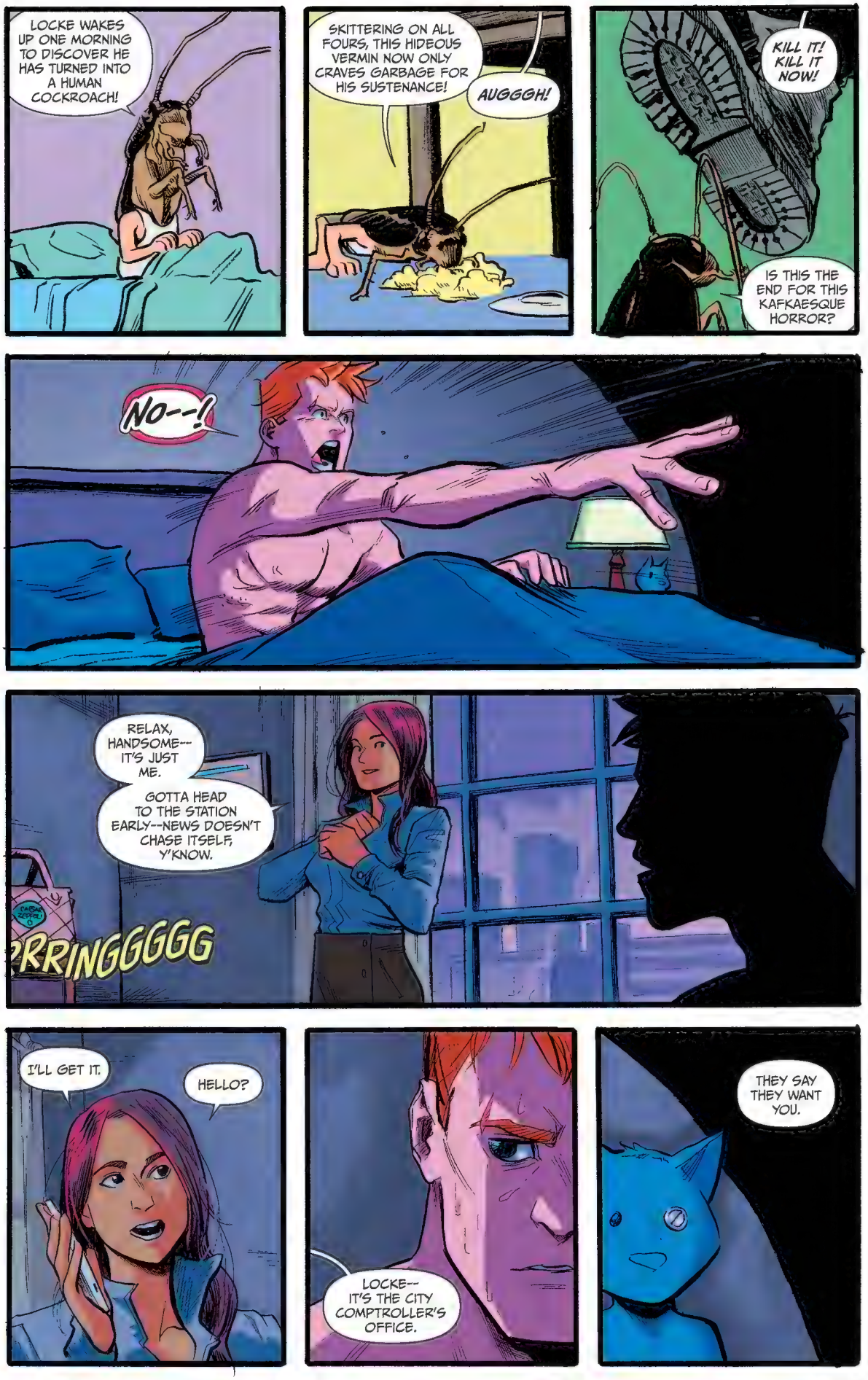
--NO LEADS ON THE SHOOTING OF PUBLIC WORKS CHIEF BILL WALKER, AS NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE CITY BREAK DOWN--
Exotic lands. Desert nights. Burning oil.

But no matter where I was, I always missed this.
--SANITATION WORKERS REMAIN ON STRIKE, EVEN AS GARBAGE THREATENS TO CHOKE OFF MAJOR STREETS--
LOOKING FOR A GOOD TIME, SOLDIER?


WHAM!
The lights. The noise. The excitement.
YES, I AM.
HEY!
--IT'S A DIRTY JOB, BUT SOMEBODY'S GOTTA DO IT--

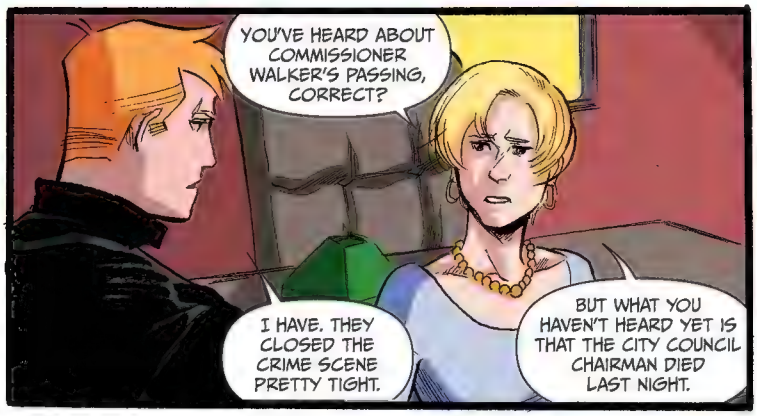
I always missed the city.
HELLO, MISTER COUNCILMAN.
I'M A HUGE FAN.
--EITHER WAY, IT'S CERTAINLY NOT GOOD NEWS FOR THE CITY COUNCIL CHAIRMAN'S REELECTION--

--AND NOW, LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT TONIGHT'S SPORTS--
There's no place like home.

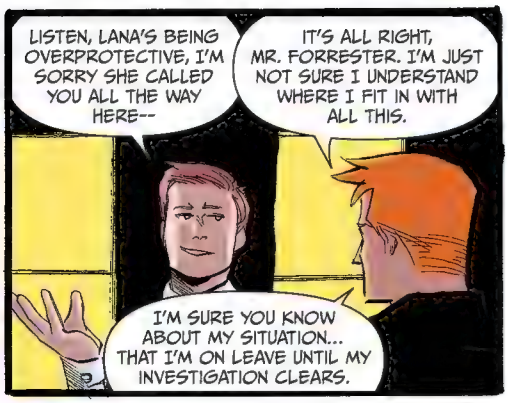

LOCKE WAKES UP ONE MORNING TO DISCOVER HE HAS TURNED INTO A HUMAN COCKROACH!
SKITTERING ON ALL FOURS, THIS HIDEOUS VERMIN NOW ONLY CRAVES GARBAGE FOR HIS SUSTENANCE!
AUGGGH!
KILL IT! KILL IT NOW!
IS THIS THE END FOR THIS KAFKAESQUE HORROR?
NO--!
RELAX, HANDSOME--- IT'S JUST ME.
GOTTA HEAD TO THE STATION EARLY--NEWS DOESN'T CHASE ITSELF, Y'KNOW.
RRRINGGGGG
I'LL GET IT.
HELLO?
LOCKE-- IT'S THE CITY COMPTROLLER'S OFFICE.
THEY SAY THEY WANT YOU.

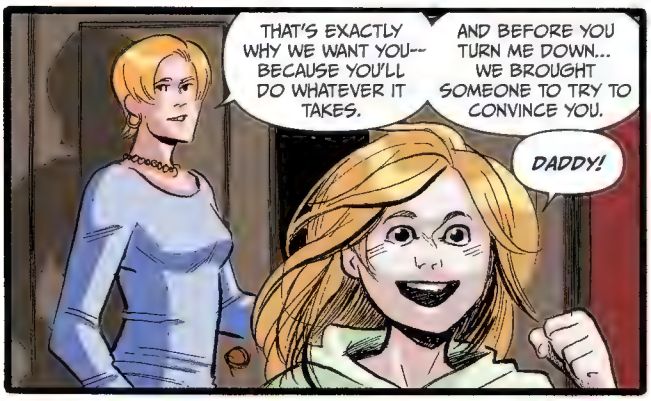
Hal and Lana Forrester have always been in the public eye.
PLEASE... I NEED YOUR HELP.
I THINK SOMEONE'S AFTER MY HUSBAND.

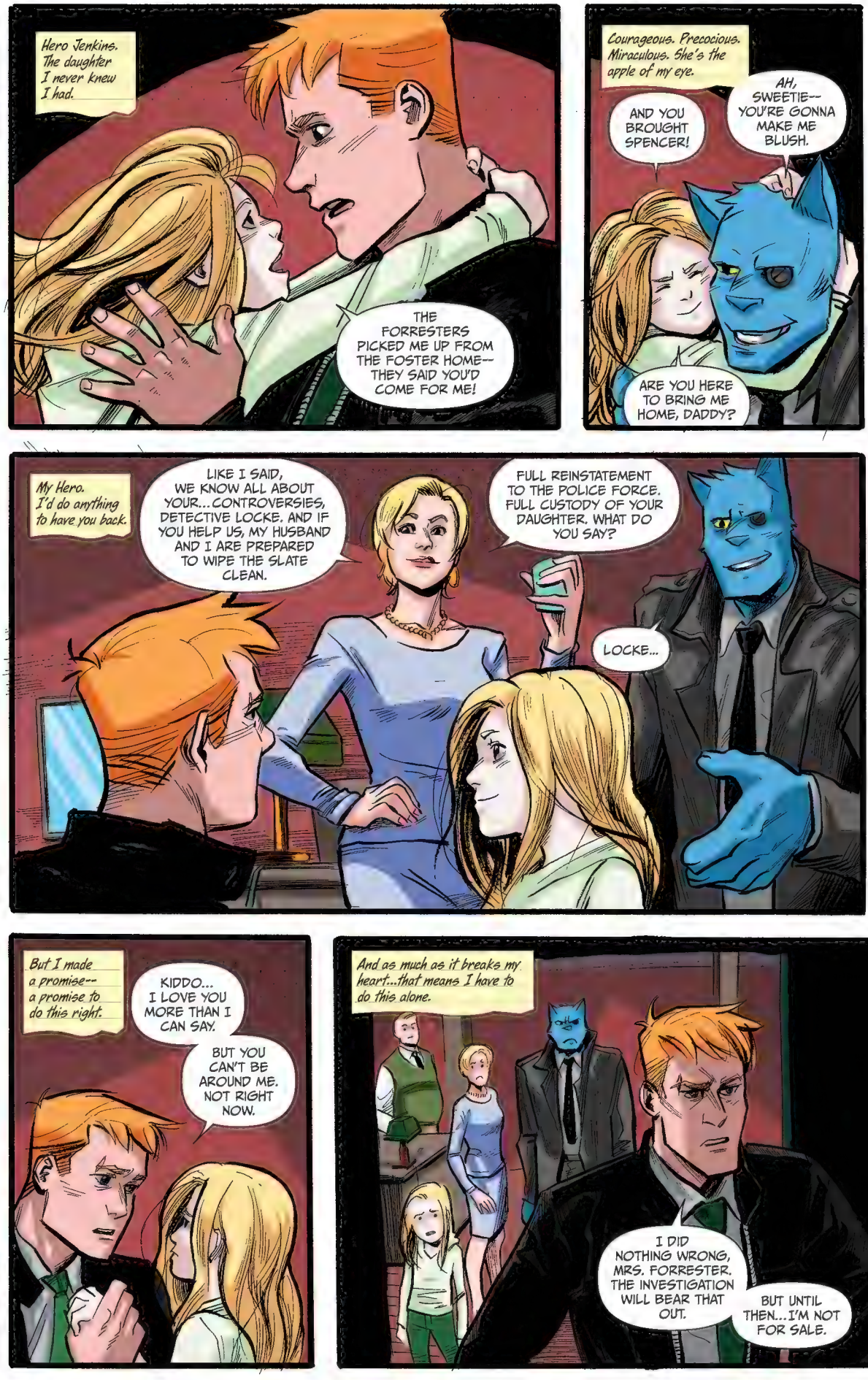
He's the City Comptroller. She's the city's leading philanthropist.
MR. AND MRS. FORRESTER--
PLEASE. JUST HAL AND LANA IS FINE.
DON'T MIND THE DOG---OSCAR'S VERY WELL-BEHAVED FOR HIS BREED.
But if they're calling a washed-up cop like me, they must be desperate.


YOU'VE HEARD ABOUT COMMISSIONER WALKER'S PASSING, CORRECT?
I HAVE. THEY CLOSED THE CRIME SCENE PRETTY TIGHT.
BUT WHAT YOU HAVEN'T HEARD YET IS THAT THE CITY COUNCIL CHAIRMAN DIED LAST NIGHT.

I THINK SOMEONE'S GOING AFTER PUBLIC SERVANTS, DETECTIVE---AND I WANT THEM CAUGHT BEFORE HAL IS NEXT.


LISTEN, LANA'S BEING OVERPROTECTIVE, I'M SORRY SHE CALLED YOU ALL THE WAY HERE--
IT'S ALL RIGHT, MR. FORRESTER. I'M JUST NOT SURE I UNDERSTAND WHERE I FIT IN WITH ALL THIS.
I'M SURE YOU KNOW ABOUT MY SITUATION... THAT I'M ON LEAVE UNTIL MY INVESTIGATION CLEARS.


THAT'S EXACTLY WHY WE WANT YOU-- BECAUSE YOU'LL DO WHATEVER IT TAKES.
AND BEFORE YOU TURN ME DOWN... WE BROUGHT SOMEONE TO TRY TO CONVINCE YOU.
DADDY!


Hero Jenkins. The daughter I never knew I had.
THE FORRESTERS PICKED ME UP FROM THE FOSTER HOME-- THEY SAID YOU'D COME FOR ME!
Courageous. Precocious. Miraculous. She's the apple of my eye.
AND YOU BROUGHT SPENCER!
AH, SWEETIE-- YOU'RE GONNA MAKE ME BLUSH.
ARE YOU HERE TO BRING ME HOME, DADDY?
My Hero. I'd do anything to have you back.
LIKE I SAID, WE KNOW ALL ABOUT YOUR... CONTROVERSIES, DETECTIVE LOCKE. AND IF YOU HELP US, MY HUSBAND AND I ARE PREPARED TO WIPE THE SLATE CLEAN.
FULL REINSTATEMENT TO THE POLICE FORCE. FULL CUSTODY OF YOUR DAUGHTER. WHAT DO YOU SAY?
LOCKE...
But I made a promise-- a promise to do this right.
KIDDO... I LOVE YOU MORE THAN I CAN SAY.
BUT YOU CAN'T BE AROUND ME. NOT RIGHT NOW.
And as much as it breaks my heart...that means I have to do this alone.
I DID NOTHING WRONG, MRS. FORRESTER. THE INVESTIGATION WILL BEAR THAT OUT.
BUT UNTIL THEN... I'M NOT FOR SALE.

I can feel Spencer staring as we drive through the night.
Can't tell if he wants to slug me or just eat me alive.
WHAT WERE YOU TRYING TO PROVE BACK THERE?
BESIDES CRUSHING THAT GIRL'S SPIRIT, THAT IS.

DON'T GO THERE, SPENCE-- HERO'S TOO IMPORTANT.
THAT MEANS WE PLAY THIS BY THE BOOK. THAT MEANS NO SHORTCUTS-- AND NO STRINGS.

REALLY?
THEN WHY ARE WE AT THE CRIME SCENE?
WHAT?

HOW DID WE GET HERE?
...
PUBLIC WORKS BLD
POLICE LINE DO NOT
PUBLIC WORKS

COULD BE YOUR INTUITION TALKING, LOCKE.
MAYBE YOU SHOULD JUST LISTEN TO IT.

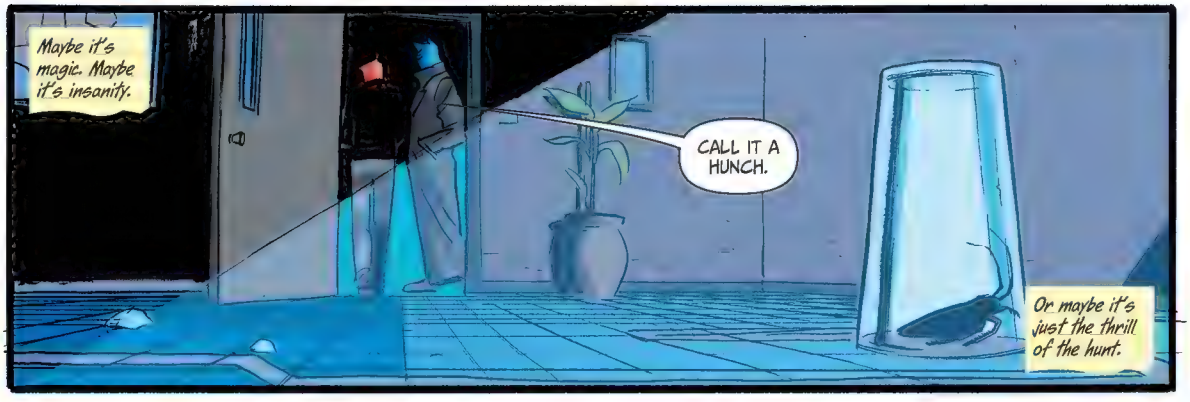
I hesitate...but only for just a second.
ALL RIGHT, SPENCE.
JUST FOR OLD TIME'S SAKE.

Then instinct kicks in. Time slows down.
THAT'S MORE LIKE IT.
BLOOD SPATTER LENGTH SUGGESTS SOMETHING HIGH-POWERED.
And just like that... I'm a detective again.

AND LOOK AT THIS DEFORMATION--BULLET FRAGMENTS EVERYWHERE. YOU PICKING UP ANYTHING?
≥SNIFF SNIFF≤ ...SMELLS LIKE GARBAGE, DIRT AND...SOMETHING WEIRD.

We've done this dance a hundred times, Spencer and I.
HH. IS IT PHEROMONES?

Yet we always find a way to pick up a few new steps.
WHAT MAKES YOU SAY THAT?
CLINK


Maybe it's magic. Maybe it's insanity.
CALL IT A HUNCH.
Or maybe it's just the thrill of the hunt.

With no corpse at the crime scene, the cockroach told me everything I needed to know.
The Landfill. The city's decaying monument of garbage and rot-- and a perfect hotbed of insect pheromones.
Spencer tenses up before we even see the corpse.
JESUS.
I KNOW, SPENCE. STAY SHARP...
Everything feels wrong tonight.
WHOEVER DID THIS COULD STILL BE HERE.
UNFF!
WHAKK!
KLKTTT!
OH...
CRAP.
And we might just be in over our heads.
KRK
PLEASE FORGIVE THE DECOR-- I WASN'T EXPECTING GUESTS.
THE NAME'S ROACH. LET ME GIVE YOU THE ROYAL WELCOME.

HRM. I LIKE THAT SCAR.
HOW'D YOU GET IT? KNIFE? GLASS?
YEAH-- LOOK HOW JAGGED IT LOOKS. DEFINITELY A BEER BOTTLE.
OLD, TOO. YOU'VE BEEN CARRYING THAT ONE A WHILE.
WHO DID THIS TO YOU, OFFICER LOCKE? WAS IT DADDY? WAS YOUR DADDY A DRUNK?
NO--IT WAS MOMMY, WASN'T IT?
RRFF-- IT'S DETECTIVE.
HEH. I LIKE YOU. YOU STAND ON CEREMONY.
I THINK WE'RE TWO OF A KIND. YOU'RE A SURVIVOR. LIKE ME.
THE ONLY PROBLEM IS...
YOU'RE STILL INCOMPLETE.
SNAP
NNNYARRRR
NO!

HUH. DIDN'T TAKE YOU FOR THE DOLL-PLAYING TYPE. TAKES ALL KINDS, I GUESS.
SPENCE...
I KNOW IT'S GONNA TAKE MORE THAN JUST A BEATING TO BREAK YOU.
GRAAAA
RRRRAAAA!
WHAP
BUT YOU'RE GONNA HAVE TO BREAK IF YOU WANNA LEARN THE TRUTH--THE TRUTH THE REST OF THESE MAGGOTS CAN'T BEGIN TO COMPREHEND.
KSSHAH!
HNFF!
YOU SEE, PAIN ISN'T A PUNISHMENT. IT'S A TEACHER--A LIBERATOR.
UNNH...
BECAUSE ONCE YOU'VE HAD THE WORST DAY OF YOUR LIFE...
NOTHING CAN EVER TOUCH YOU AGAIN.
RRRRRRRR

WWWNNCH!
5 NEWS
TIME TO MOVE, SWEETHEART--I DIDN'T FOLLOW YOU ALL NIGHT JUST TO WATCH MY 11 O'CLOCK LEAD GET KILLED.
M-MELINDA?
YOU CAN'T BE HERE--THAT MANIAC IS GONNA--
IT'S ALL RIGHT, BUDDY...
THIS BUG HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY SQUASHED.
SO...I GET THE EXCLUSIVE SINCE I SAVED YOUR LIFE, RIGHT?
HUFF... JUST GIMME A MINUTE TO CATCH MY BREATH...
AND THEN WE'RE GONNA HAVE A TALK ABOUT SETTING HEALTHY BOUNDARIES.

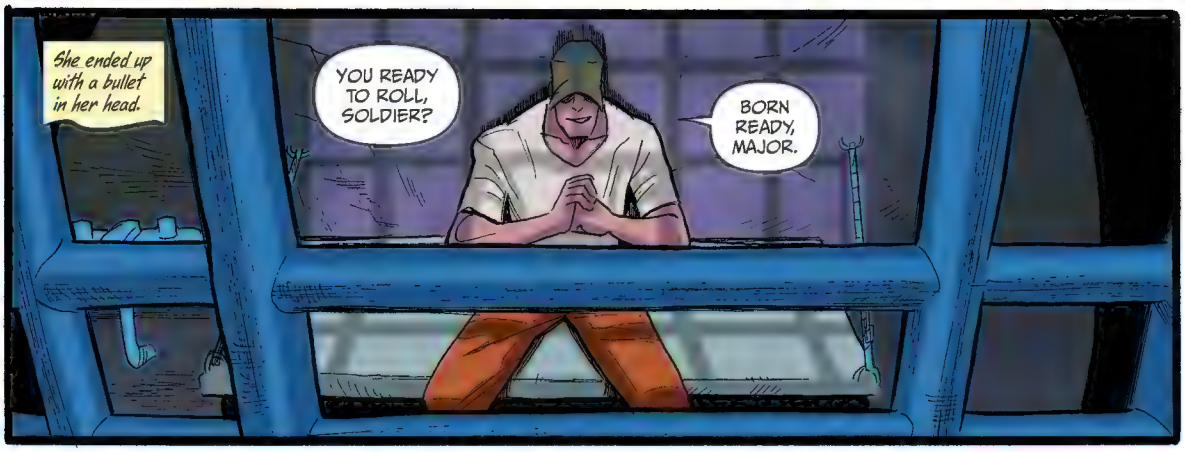
IT WAS BOUND TO HAPPEN SOMETIME.
--POLICE HAVE NO ADDITIONAL DETAILS ABOUT THE UNIDENTIFIED SHOOTER FOUND AT THE MUNICIPAL LANDFILL--
STILL, I GOTTA ADMIT--IT'S THRILLING.
WATCHING THEM ACT AS IF THEY KNOW ALL THE ANSWERS.
--ONE CONFIRMED DEAD, WITH OFFICIALS GIVING NO ANSWERS AS TO HOW THE FACILITY WAS COMPROMISED WITHOUT DETECTION--
BUT NO MATTER HOW DEEP THEY DIG...
THEY'LL NEVER KNOW THE REAL SCORE.
--BUT AS INVESTIGATORS CONTINUE TO FIND CHILLING EVIDENCE OF MILITARY-GRADE WEAPONS AT THE SCENE--
AND THEY'RE NEVER GONNA SEE WHAT'S COMING.
--WITH MORE QUESTIONS THAN ANSWERS, ALL THIS REPORTER CAN ASK IS... WHAT WAS THIS MYSTERY GUNMAN'S PLAN?
BUT I'VE BEEN DOING ALL THE TALKING OVER HERE--WHAT DO YOU THINK, MAJOR?

IT'S TIME TO THINK BIG, SOLDIER.
TIME TO THINK MIGHTY GODDAMN BIG.
NEXT:
ENEMY AT THE GATES!

CHAPTER TWO

Roach Riley
OH, ROACH-- I CAN'T BELIEVE WE'RE GETTING MARRIED!
IS THAT WHY MAJOR LET YOU SKIP BASIC TRAINING TONIGHT?
HECK, NO, MISS SHAPELY-- THE GENERAL JUST THOUGHT I WAS ON VALET DUTY TONIGHT.
I GIVE IT ANOTHER HOUR BEFORE HE NOTICES.
KRZZZZZ!
EESH--THAT THUNDER SOUNDS PRETTY BAD...
THEN LET'S GO INSIDE...AND PUT THAT EXTRA HOUR TO GOOD USE.
UH, MAJOR, I--
YOU'VE BEEN AWOL, PRIVATE--IT'S TIME TO ENFORCE DISCIPLINE IN THE RANKS.
I'M GONNA MAKE A SOLDIER OUTTA YOU, RILEY... EVEN IF IT'S THE LAST THING I DO.
W-WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS?
TELL US WHAT YOU KNOW, ROACH.
SPLASH
<TELL US WHAT YOU KNOW, AMERICAN DOG!>
GUB... HFFF... W-WAIT...
<SHOCK HIM UNTIL HE TALKS.>
KRZZZZZ!

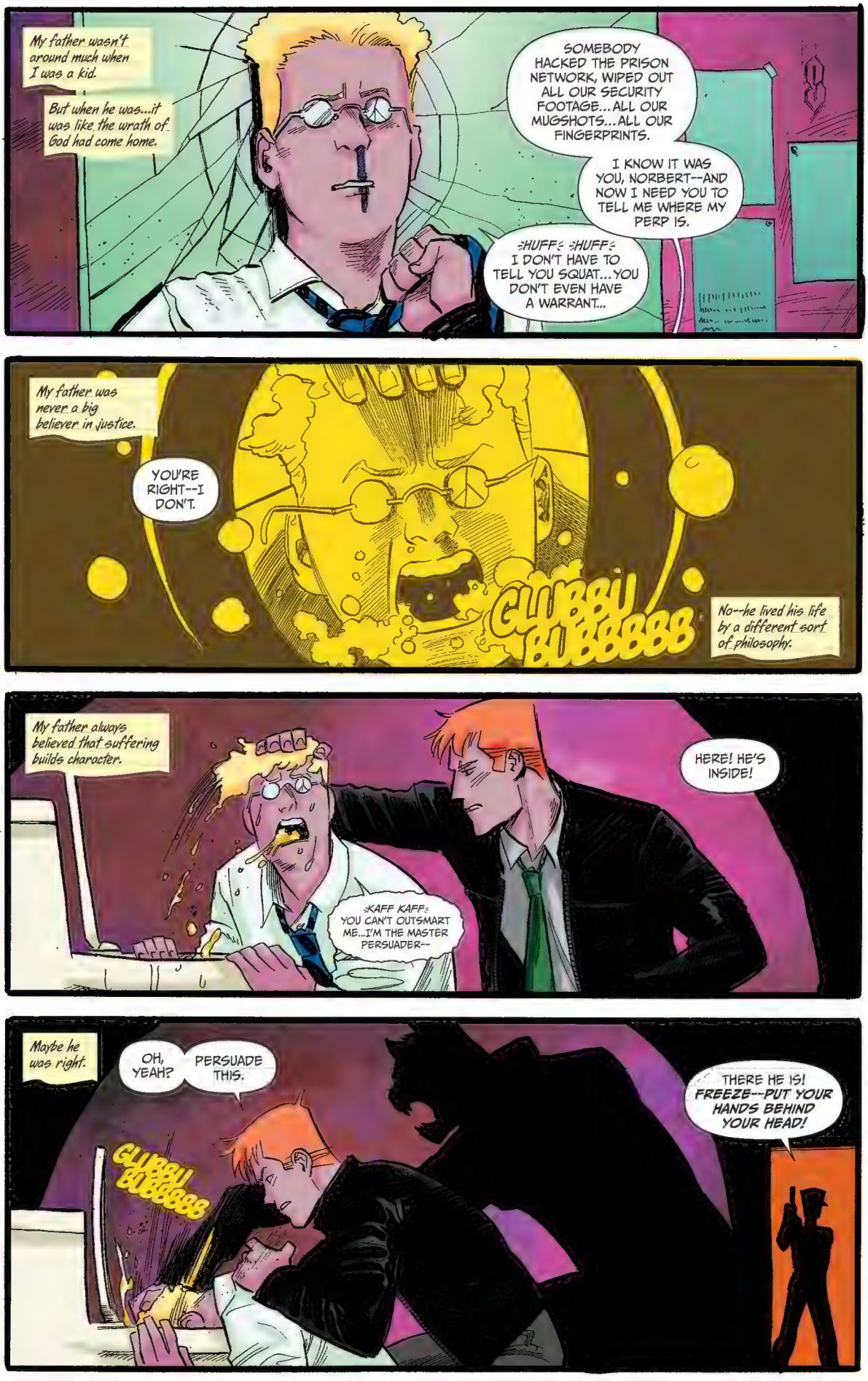
My mother always told me we get what we deserve.
WE CAN DO THIS THE EASY WAY OR THE HARD WAY...
TELL ME WHAT YOU KNOW.


She ended up with a bullet in her head.
YOU READY TO ROLL, SOLDIER?
BORN READY, MAJOR.

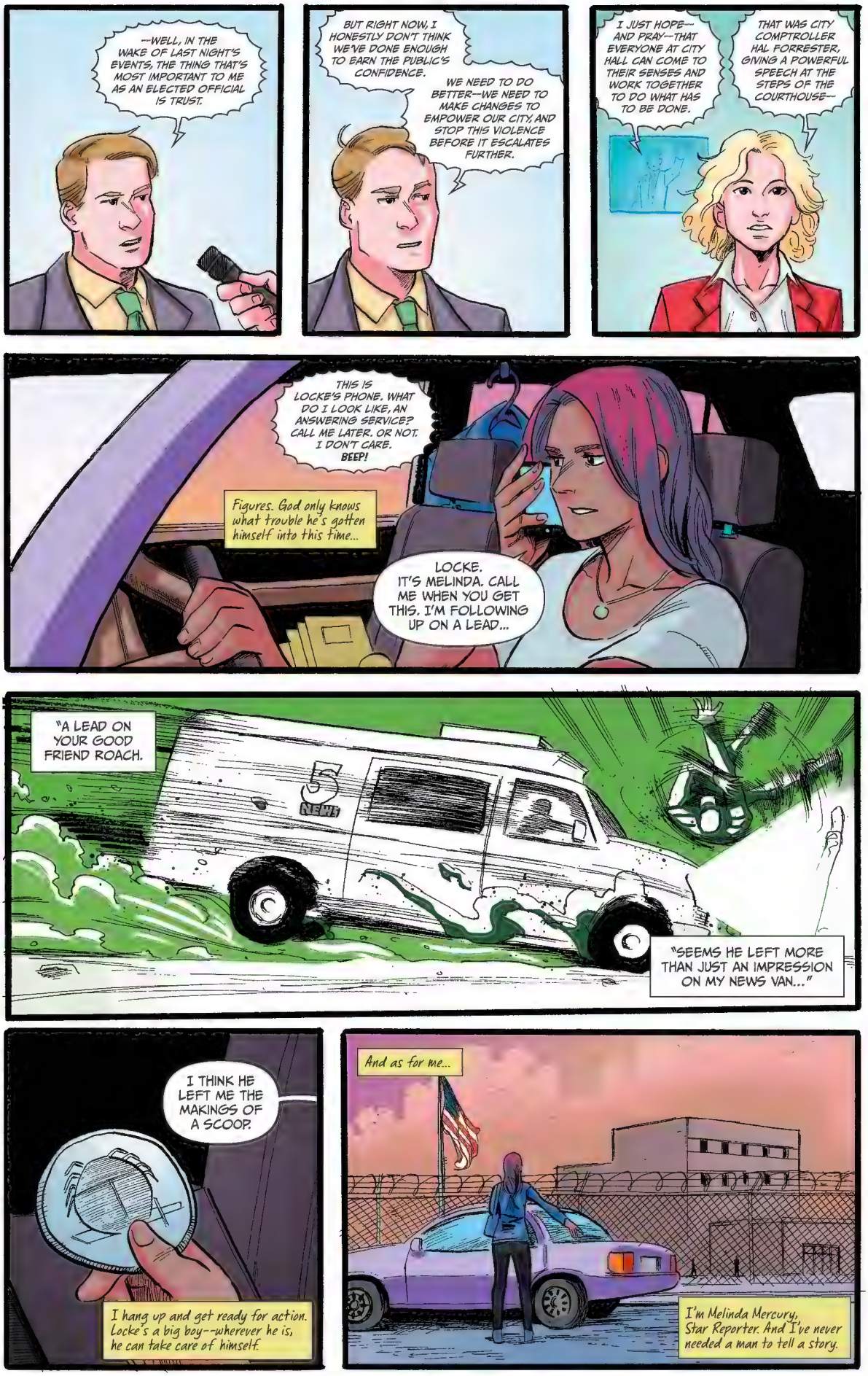
Ever since that day, I've always thought about what she said.
AND PLEASE, FOR MY SAKE...
CHOOSE THE HARD WAY.

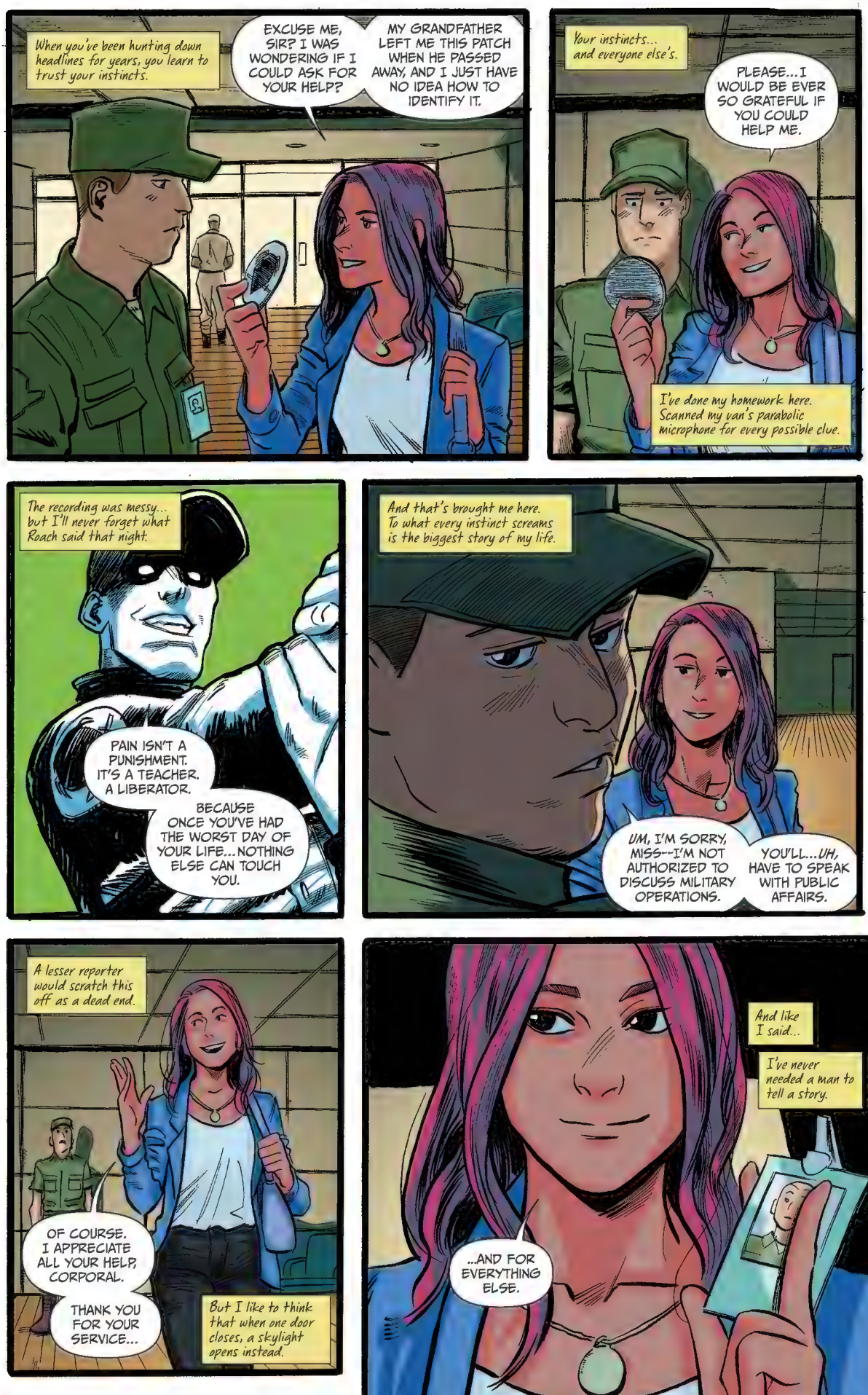
About justice. About punishment. About getting what's coming to you.
GOOD. THEN LET'S MOVE, ROACH...
IT'S TIME TO TEACH THIS CITY A LESSON IN PAIN.

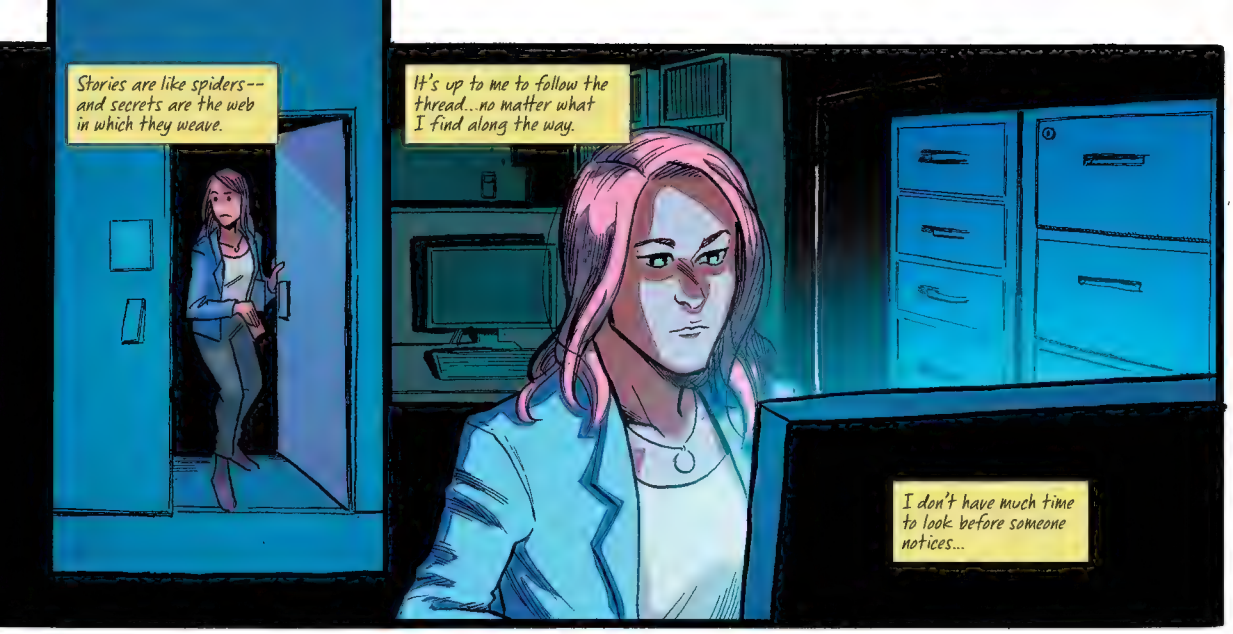
WHERE IS HE?!
WHERE
IS
ROACH?!


My father wasn't around much when I was a kid.
But when he was...it was like the wrath of God had come home.
SOMEBODY HACKED THE PRISON NETWORK, WIPED OUT ALL OUR SECURITY FOOTAGE...ALL OUR MUGSHOTS...ALL OUR FINGERPRINTS.
I KNOW IT WAS YOU, NORBERT--AND NOW I NEED YOU TO TELL ME WHERE MY PERP IS.
:HUFF: :HUFF: I DON'T HAVE TO TELL YOU SQUAT...YOU DON'T EVEN HAVE A WARRANT...
My father was never a big believer in justice.
YOU'RE RIGHT--I DON'T.
GLUBBU BUBBBBBB
No--he lived his life by a different sort of philosophy.
My father always believed that suffering builds character.
aaaa
HERE! HE'S INSIDE!
:KAFF KAFF: YOU CAN'T OUTSMART ME...I'M THE MASTER PERSUADER--
Maybe he was right.
OH, YEAH?
PERSUADE THIS.
GLUBBU BUBBBBBB
THERE HE IS! FREEZE--PUT YOUR HANDS BEHIND YOUR HEAD!

Spencer & LOCKE
Look what kinda characters we turned out to be.
DON'T MOVE, LOCKE...
DON'T EVEN BREATHE.
KLIK
KLIK
KLIK
COLLATERAL DAMAGE
WRITTEN BY DAVID PEPOSE
ART BY JORGE SANTIAGO JR.
COLORS BY JASEN SMITH
LETTERS BY COLIN BELL

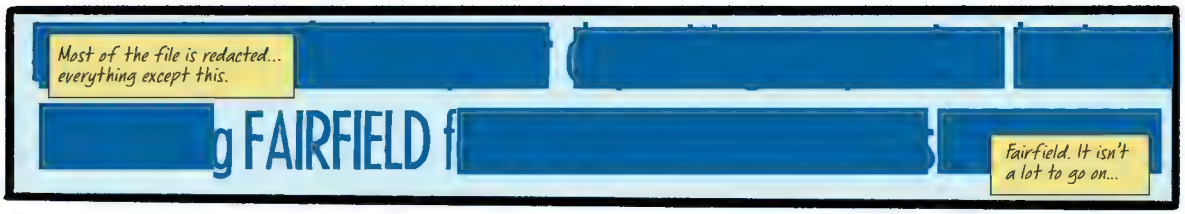

--WELL, IN THE WAKE OF LAST NIGHT'S EVENTS, THE THING THAT'S MOST IMPORTANT TO ME AS AN ELECTED OFFICIAL IS TRUST.
BUT RIGHT NOW, I HONESTLY DON'T THINK WE'VE DONE ENOUGH TO EARN THE PUBLIC'S CONFIDENCE.
WE NEED TO DO BETTER--WE NEED TO MAKE CHANGES TO EMPOWER OUR CITY, AND STOP THIS VIOLENCE BEFORE IT ESCALATES FURTHER.
I JUST HOPE-- AND PRAY--THAT EVERYONE AT CITY HALL CAN COME TO THEIR SENSES AND WORK TOGETHER TO DO WHAT HAS TO BE DONE.
THAT WAS CITY COMPTROLLER HAL FORRESTER, GIVING A POWERFUL SPEECH AT THE STEPS OF THE COURTHOUSE--
THIS IS LOCKE'S PHONE. WHAT DO I LOOK LIKE, AN ANSWERING SERVICE? CALL ME LATER. OR NOT. I DON'T CARE. BEEP!
Figures. God only knows what trouble he's gotten himself into this time...
LOCKE. IT'S MELINDA. CALL ME WHEN YOU GET THIS. I'M FOLLOWING UP ON A LEAD...
"A LEAD ON YOUR GOOD FRIEND ROACH.
5 NEWS
"SEEMS HE LEFT MORE THAN JUST AN IMPRESSION ON MY NEWS VAN..."
I THINK HE LEFT ME THE MAKINGS OF A SCOOP.
I hang up and get ready for action. Locke's a big boy--wherever he is, he can take care of himself.
And as for me...
I'm Melinda Mercury, Star Reporter. And I've never needed a man to tell a story.


When you've been hunting down headlines for years, you learn to trust your instincts.
EXCUSE ME, SIR? I WAS WONDERING IF I COULD ASK FOR YOUR HELP?
MY GRANDFATHER LEFT ME THIS PATCH WHEN HE PASSED AWAY, AND I JUST HAVE NO IDEA HOW TO IDENTIFY IT.
Your instincts... and everyone else's.
PLEASE...I WOULD BE EVER SO GRATEFUL IF YOU COULD HELP ME.
I've done my homework here. Scanned my van's parabolic microphone for every possible clue.
The recording was messy... but I'll never forget what Roach said that night.
PAIN ISN'T A PUNISHMENT. IT'S A TEACHER. A LIBERATOR.
BECAUSE ONCE YOU'VE HAD THE WORST DAY OF YOUR LIFE...NOTHING ELSE CAN TOUCH YOU.
And that's brought me here. To what every instinct screams is the biggest story of my life.
UM, I'M SORRY, MISS--I'M NOT AUTHORIZED TO DISCUSS MILITARY OPERATIONS.
YOU'LL...UH, HAVE TO SPEAK WITH PUBLIC AFFAIRS.
A lesser reporter would scratch this off as a dead end.
OF COURSE. I APPRECIATE ALL YOUR HELP, CORPORAL.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE...
But I like to think that when one door closes, a skylight opens instead.
And like I said...
I've never needed a man to tell a story.
...AND FOR EVERYTHING ELSE.

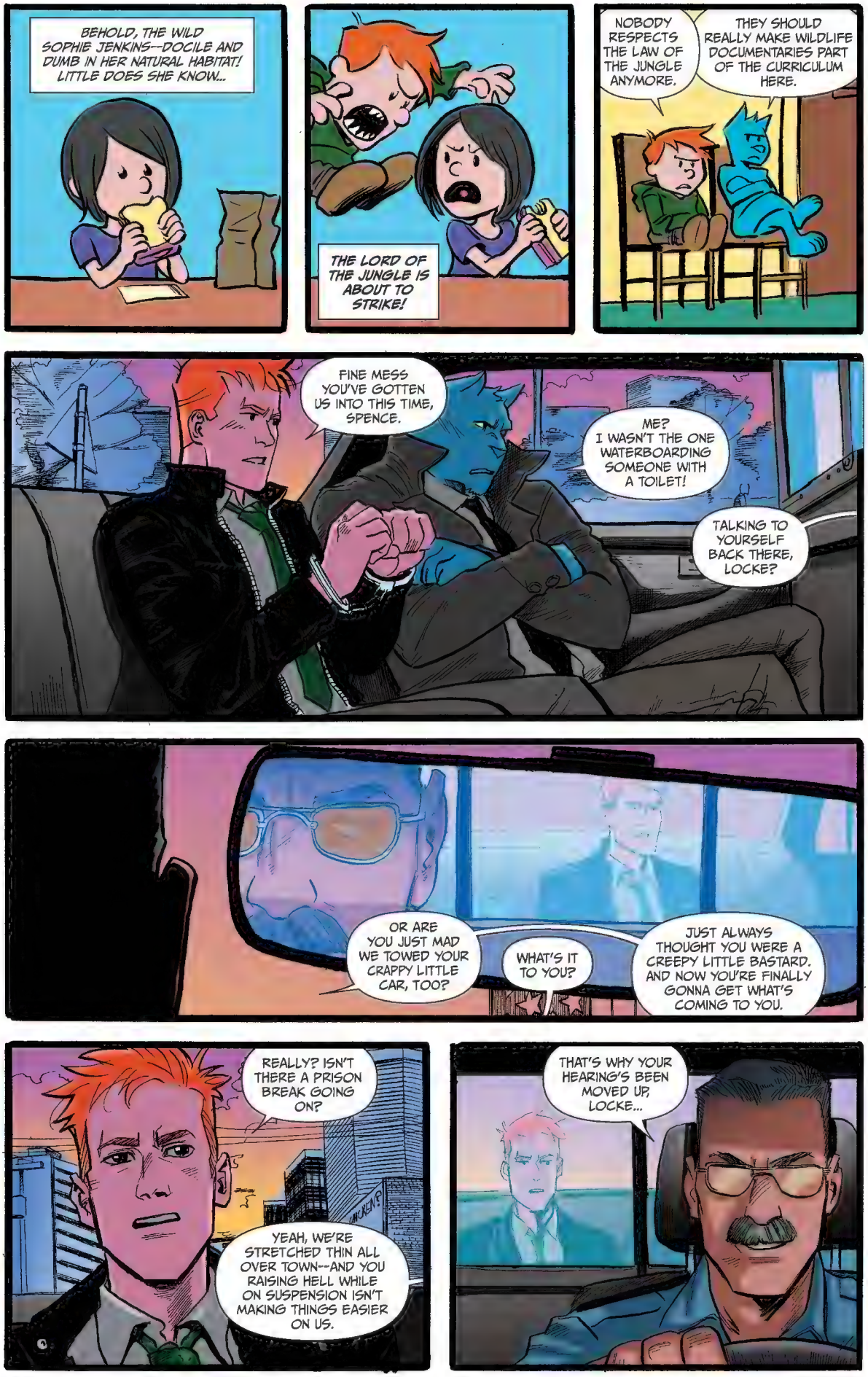

Stories are like spiders--and secrets are the web in which they weave.
It's up to me to follow the thread...no matter what I find along the way.
I don't have much time to look before someone notices...

OPERATION SCARAB
But that's when a little bug catches my eye.

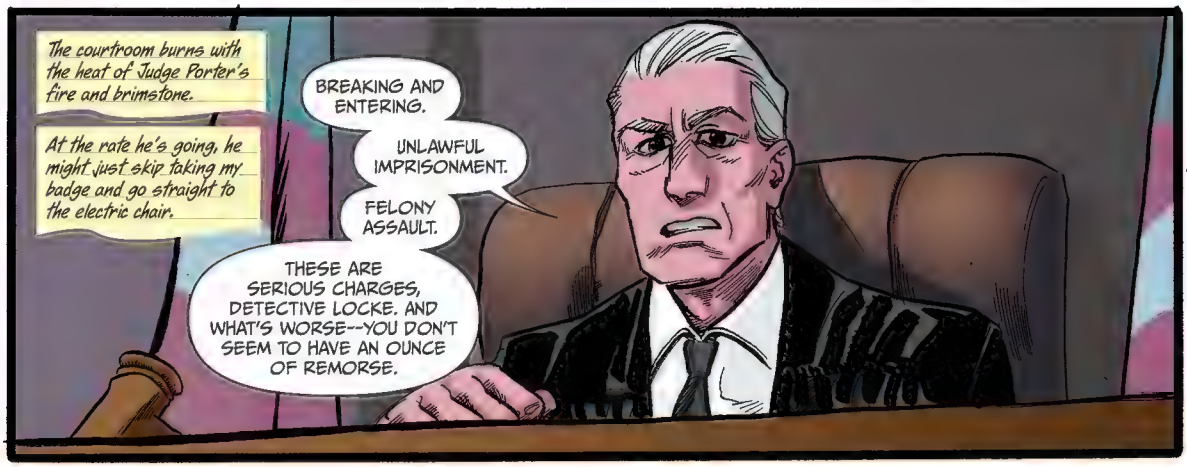
There he is--Roach himself.
A homicidal maniac in happier times.

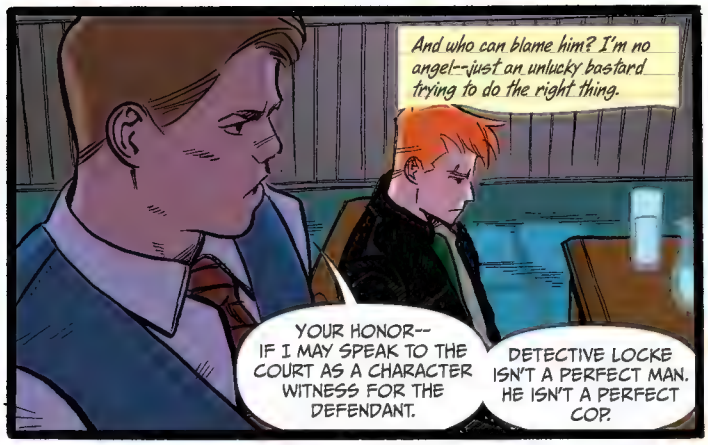

Most of the file is redacted...everything except this.
g FAIRFIELD f
Fairfield. It isn't a lot to go on...

But it doesn't take much to turn the world upside-down.


BEHOLD, THE WILD SOPHIE JENKINS--DOCILE AND DUMB IN HER NATURAL HABITAT! LITTLE DOES SHE KNOW...
THE LORD OF THE JUNGLE IS ABOUT TO STRIKE!
NOBODY RESPECTS THE LAW OF THE JUNGLE ANYMORE.
THEY SHOULD REALLY MAKE WILDLIFE DOCUMENTARIES PART OF THE CURRICULUM HERE.
FINE MESS YOU'VE GOTTEN US INTO THIS TIME, SPENCE.
ME? I WASN'T THE ONE WATERBOARDING SOMEONE WITH A TOILET!
TALKING TO YOURSELF BACK THERE, LOCKE?
OR ARE YOU JUST MAD WE TOWED YOUR CRAPPY LITTLE CAR, TOO?
WHAT'S IT TO YOU?
JUST ALWAYS THOUGHT YOU WERE A CREEPY LITTLE BASTARD. AND NOW YOU'RE FINALLY GONNA GET WHAT'S COMING TO YOU.
REALLY? ISN'T THERE A PRISON BREAK GOING ON?
YEAH, WE'RE STRETCHED THIN ALL OVER TOWN--AND YOU RAISING HELL WHILE ON SUSPENSION ISN'T MAKING THINGS EASIER ON US.
THAT'S WHY YOUR HEARING'S BEEN MOVED UP, LOCKE...

"HOPE YOU'RE READY FOR A BLOODBATH."
This must be what it feels like to be a dead man walking.
The courtroom feels like a maw of marble and concrete, ready to swallow my entire life whole.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT THIS, PARTNER. WE'LL GET THROUGH THIS--JUST LIKE WE ALWAYS DO.
Even Hal Forrester's come to bat for me. Not that that'll help.
The odds are stacked too high--I've pissed off all the wrong people. And now they're out looking for blood.
I DUNNO, SPENCE--YOU CAN'T FIGHT CITY HALL.
DADDY!
Hero. My daughter. She's the best thing I've ever done.
THEY SAID YOU WERE IN TROUBLE, DADDY...
I COULDN'T LET YOU DO THIS ALONE.
I'd do anything to keep her from seeing this.
OH, SWEETIE... YOU WATCH OUT FOR SPENCER, ALL RIGHT?
I WANT YOU TO BE JUST LIKE HIM--BRAVE AND STRONG. JUST LIKE A PANTHER.
But there's not always a happy ending in store... not for people like us.
I JUST WANT TO BE LIKE YOU, DADDY.
I LOVE YOU, HERO--BUT I DON'T WANT YOU TO BE LIKE ME.
I WANT YOU TO BE BETTER.


The courtroom burns with the heat of Judge Porter's fire and brimstone.
At the rate he's going, he might just skip taking my badge and go straight to the electric chair.
BREAKING AND ENTERING.
UNLAWFUL IMPRISONMENT.
FELONY ASSAULT.
THESE ARE SERIOUS CHARGES, DETECTIVE LOCKE. AND WHAT'S WORSE--YOU DON'T SEEM TO HAVE AN OUNCE OF REMORSE.


And who can blame him? I'm no angel--just an unlucky bastard trying to do the right thing.
YOUR HONOR--IF I MAY SPEAK TO THE COURT AS A CHARACTER WITNESS FOR THE DEFENDANT.
DETECTIVE LOCKE ISN'T A PERFECT MAN. HE ISN'T A PERFECT COP.

But that's when I get that cold feeling in my gut.
BUT HE'S TOUGH. TENACIOUS. RELENTLESS.
IN A CITY RIDDLED WITH CRIME, WE NEED MORE PEOPLE LIKE LOCKE--PEOPLE WILLING TO STOP THE PREDATORS IN OUR MIDST.

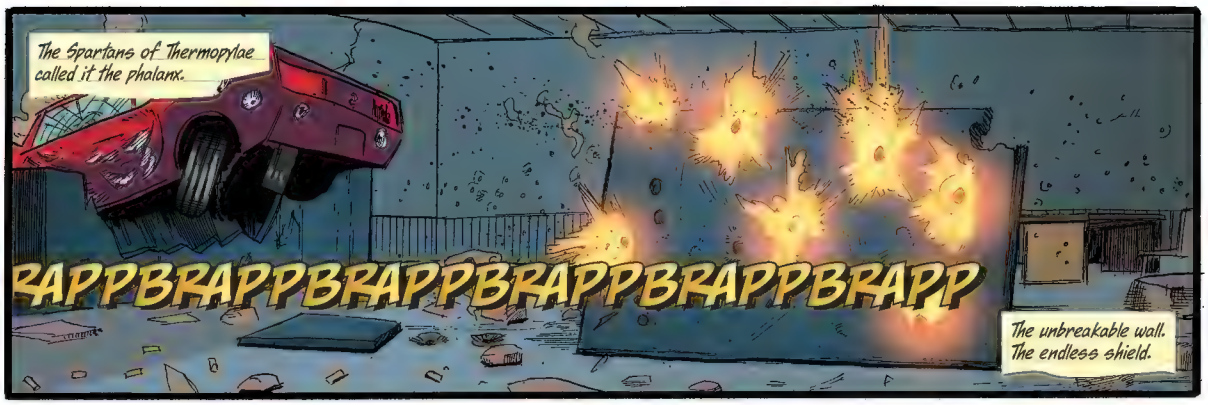
But then I catch Spencer's face--and every instinct goes into overdrive.
Anything to quiet the roar in the back of my head.

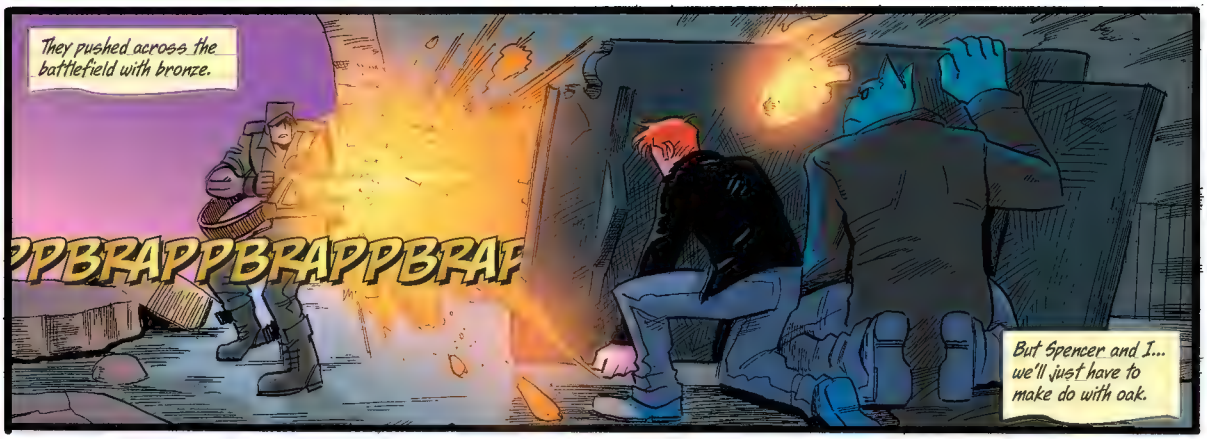
And that's when I realize...that roar isn't in my head after all.
ISN'T THE REAL QUESTION WE NEED TO BE ASKING OURSELVES...
WHAT DO WE HAVE TO DO TO NOT BE AFRAID OF THIS CITY ANYMORE?

GET DOWN!

WHAKROOOOOM!
Just when I thought things couldn't get any worse...
Somebody decides to bring a tank to a knife fight.
HI.
DO YOU HAVE A MOMENT TO TALK ABOUT YOUR LORD AND SAVIOR?
DON'T WORRY, I'LL BE FAST--I BROUGHT ENOUGH SALVATION FOR EVERYBODY.
BRRT

I know Judge Porter is dead before the ringing in my ears stops. But that's not the first thing that comes to mind.
My car. That son of a bitch wrecked my car.
I shake off the cobwebs -- Gotta think fast. Roach'll blast me in half before I make it ten steps.
DADDY!
That is...unless something else evens the odds.
GOTTA TELL YOU--
IT'S A REALLY GOOD THING--
I'VE GOT SUCH CAT-LIKE REFLEXES!
CATCH!
YEAH, SURE, TOOK YOU LONG ENOUGH!
SO WHAT'S THE PLAN? I ASSUME YOU HAVE A PLAN, RIGHT?
YOU ALWAYS ASK QUESTIONS WHERE YOU'RE GONNA HATE THE ANSWER...


The Spartans of Thermopylae called it the phalanx.
RAPPBRAPPBRAPPBRAPPBRAPPBRAPP
The unbreakable wall. The endless shield.

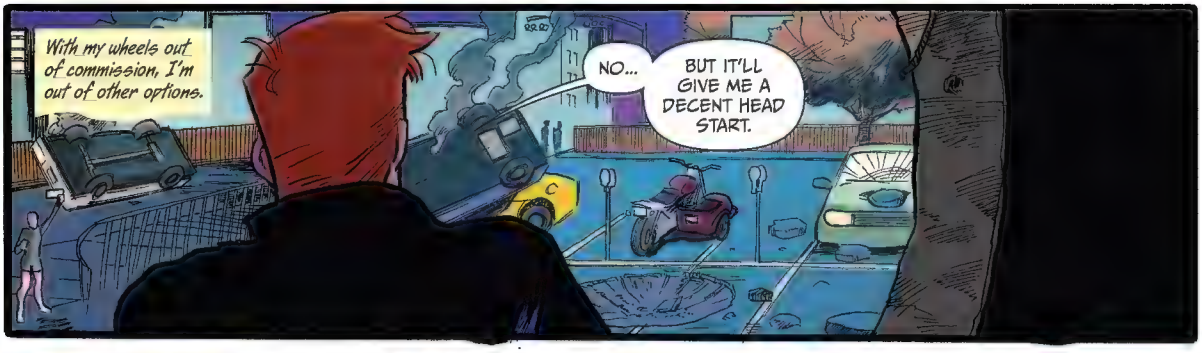

They pushed across the battlefield with bronze.
PPBRAPPBRAPPBRAP
But Spencer and I... we'll just have to make do with oak.

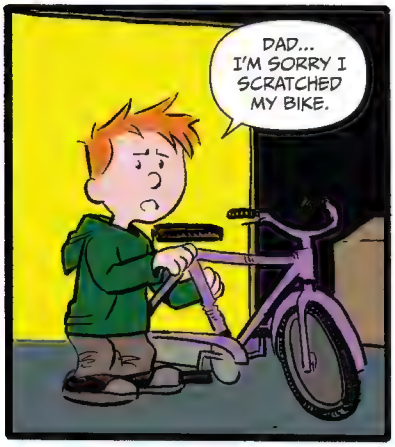
Roach thinks he can stop us with just firepower.
COME ON!
BRAPPBRA

That's his mistake-- because he's just an army of one.
HEAVY HEAVY HEAVY HEAVY HEAVY
PUSHHHHH!

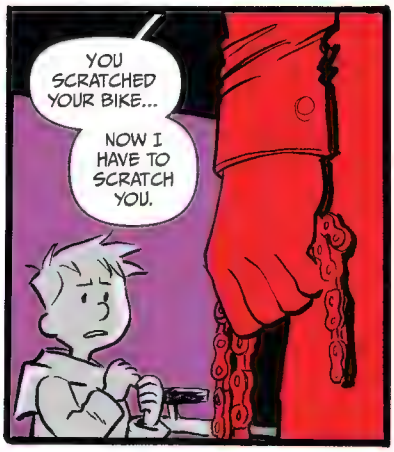
And as for me...I've always believed in strength in numbers.
WHAN

Roach is disarmed, but he's still deadly. I gotta get him away from all these civilians--away from Hero.
SMALL WORLD, EH, ROACH?
HNRFF-- DETECTIVE LOCKE. I'M IMPRESSED TO SEE YOU AGAIN, AFTER THE BEATING YOU TOOK.
BUT DO YOU REALLY THINK THIS TABLE IS GOING TO KEEP ME FROM TEARING YOU APART?


With my wheels out of commission, I'm out of other options.
NO...
BUT IT'LL GIVE ME A DECENT HEAD START.


DAD... I'M SORRY I SCRATCHED MY BIKE.

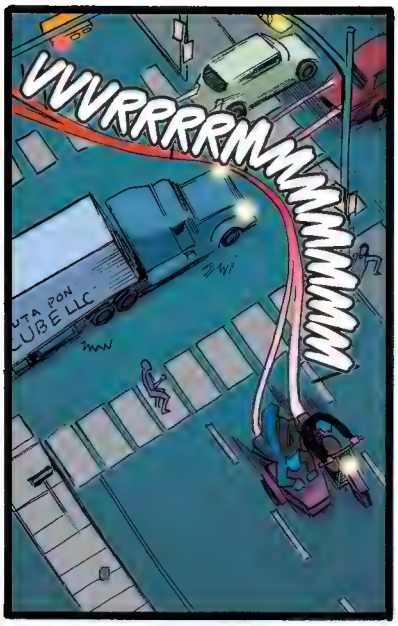
YOU HAVE TO LEARN THE RULES, SON.
A MAN TAKES CARE OF HIS THINGS... OR HIS THINGS TAKE CARE OF HIM.


YOU SCRATCHED YOUR BIKE...
NOW I HAVE TO SCRATCH YOU.

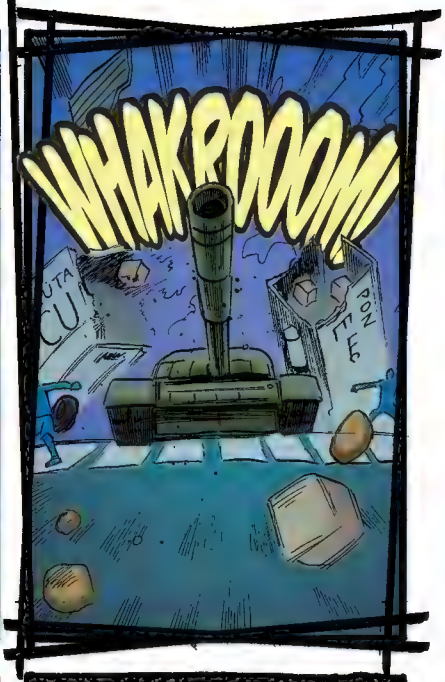
VRMM

Bikes.
I've always hated bikes.
SKRRRR

SO THAT WAS YOUR BIG PLAN? JUST RUN AWAY?
NO...
KROOM
NOT EXACTLY.
DOUBLE CHEESY BOY
MAD CITY
WHY DO I ALWAYS LET YOU PICK THE PLAN?
JUST SHUT UP AND HANG ON!


VVVRRRRMMMMMMMM

DID WE LOSE HIM?
I THINK WE LOST HIM---


WHAK BOOOM!

SERIOUSLY?
HEY, AT LEAST HE CAN'T DRIVE AND SHOOT---

FRKKMMM!

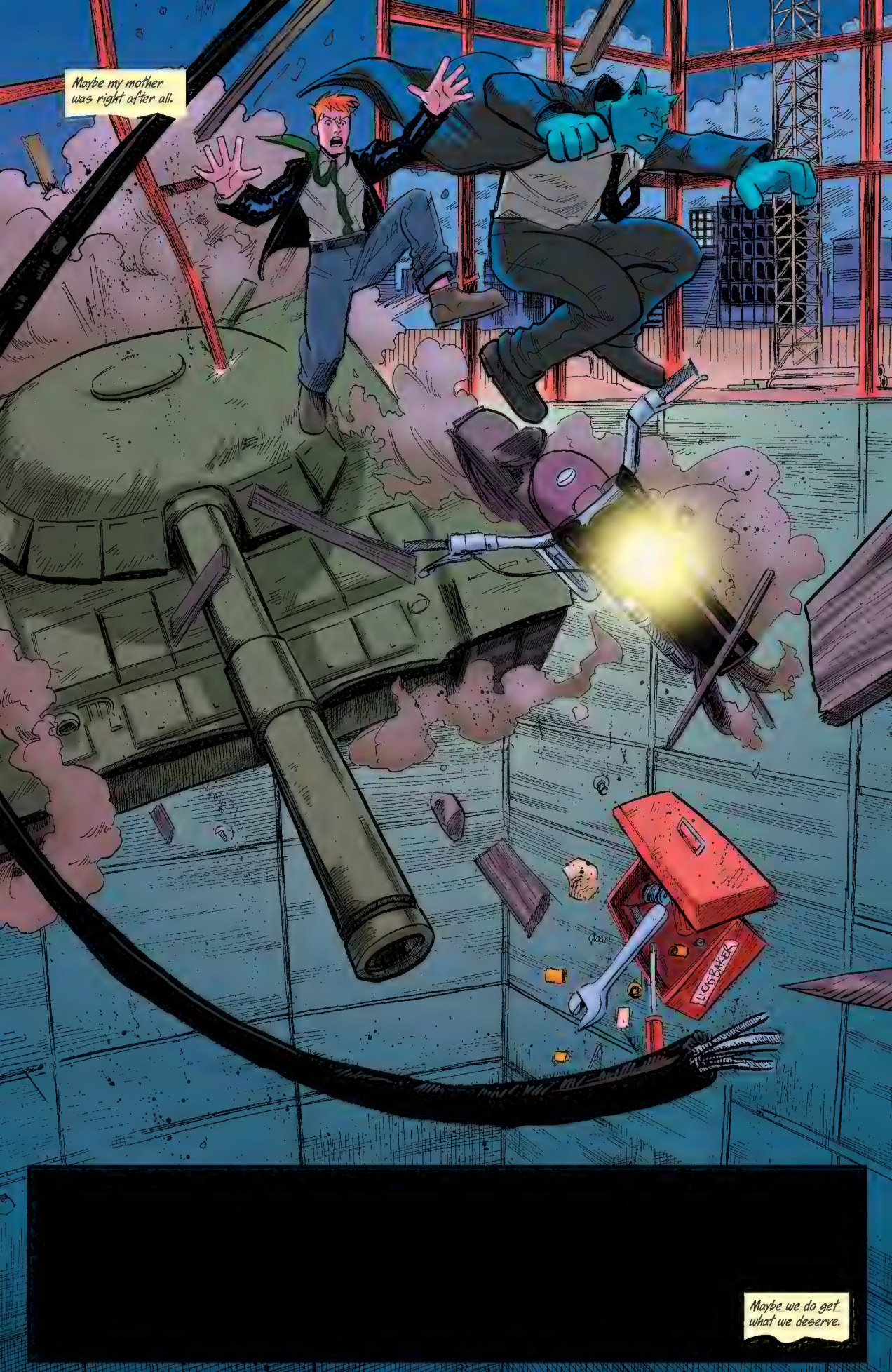
AHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!

WATCH OUT---!
KRAKOOM!

PAFF
SPENCE--

STOP HELPING!

I see the construction site ahead and feel a surge of hope.
If I can keep Roach on my tail, we can corral him down there.
But that's when the bike has other ideas.
The throttle starts to shake--the engine snarls at me in rage.
C'MON...
GRRRRRRRRRR
I tell it to shut up and keep moving--we're just a few seconds from finishing this.
C'MON, YOU BASTARD...
But a few seconds is all it takes for everything to go sideways.
POP
LOCKE!
A man takes care of his things, my father once said.
HANG ON!
DO NOT ENTER CONSTRUCTION ZONE
Or a man's things take care of him.

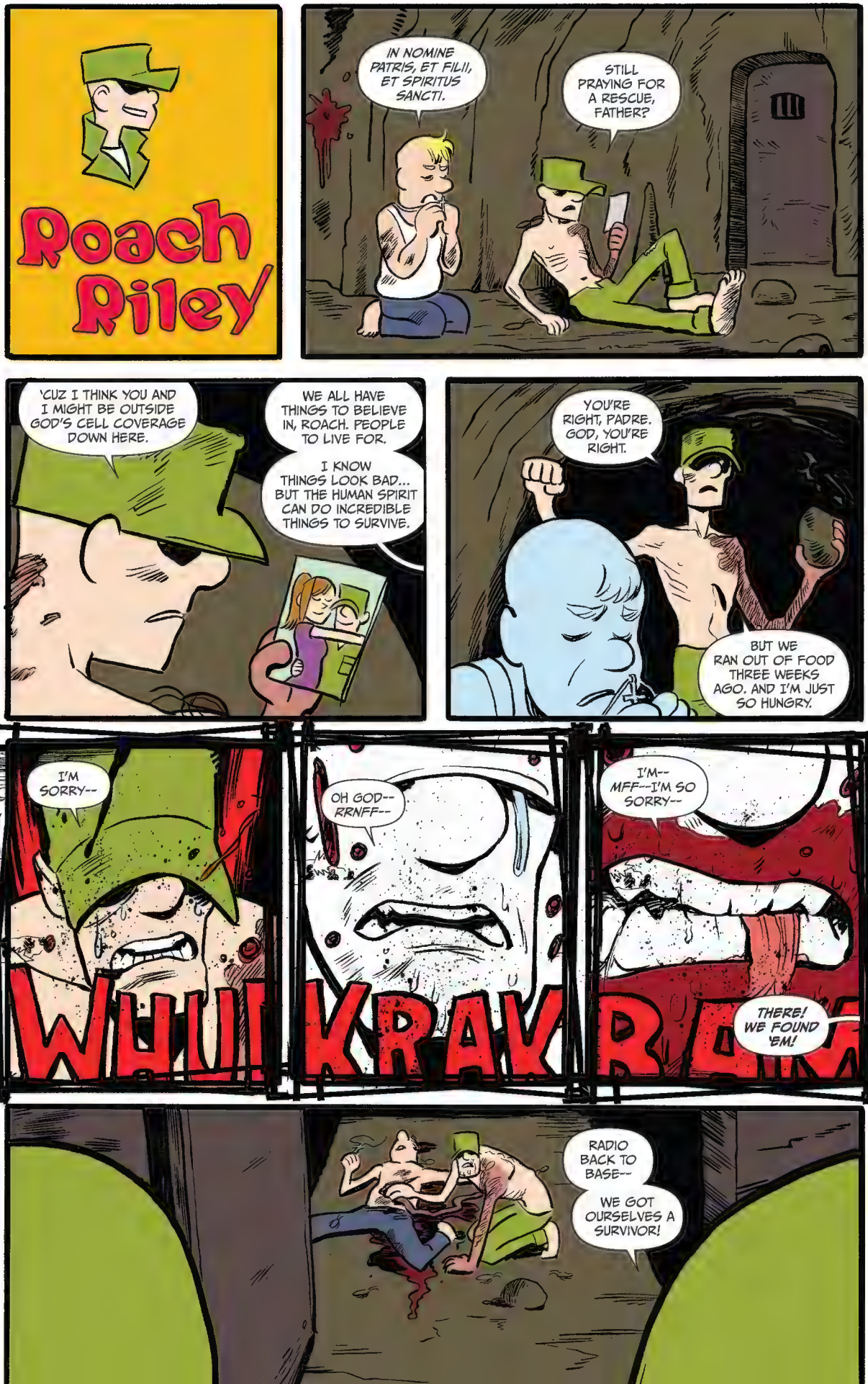

Maybe my mother was right after all.
LUCAS BAKER
Maybe we do get what we deserve.

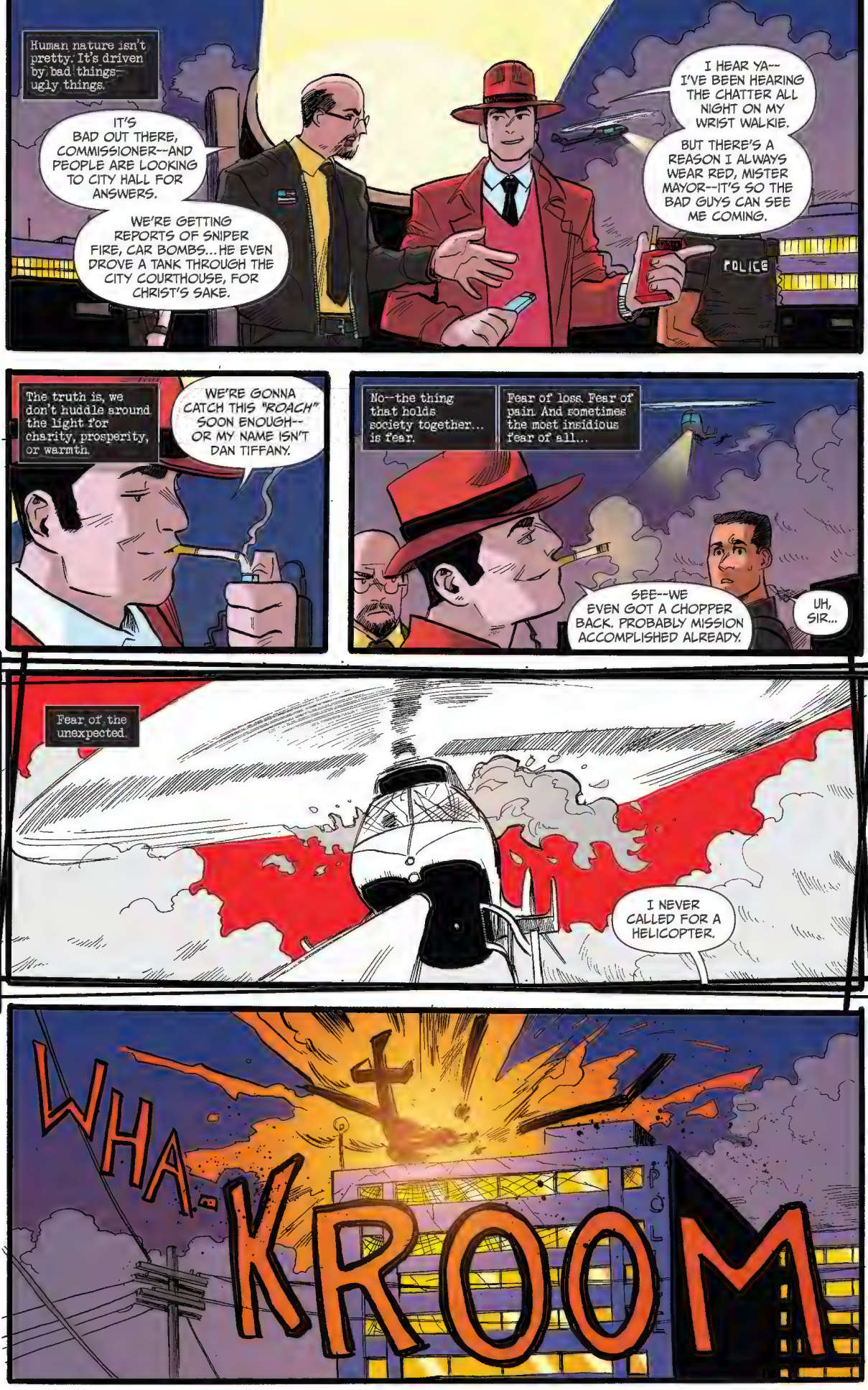
HRRNN...
WELL, THERE GOES MY INSURANCE.
DON'T WORRY...
YOU'RE ABOUT TO GO THROUGH YOUR ENTIRE DEDUCTIBLE.
WHA-KRAKK!
HEH.
HAHAHAHA HAHA...
WHAT'S SO FUNNY, ROACH? THE IDEA OF DOING TWENTY-FIVE YEARS TO LIFE?
N-NO, YOU... HEH...
YOU FORGOT ABOUT MAJOR.
WHO--?

WHABOOM
ON YOUR FEET, SOLDIER--WE'RE NOT FINISHED YET.
:KAFF KAFF: IT'S BEEN FUN, DETECTIVE LOCKE....
...BUT WE'VE GOT A CITY TO LIBERATE.

DADDY...
BRAVE AND STRONG. JUST LIKE A PANTHER.
KZZT-- SUSPECT HAS FLED THE CONSTRUCTION SITE-- I REPEAT, SUSPECT HAS FLED THE CONSTRUCTION SITE...
THINK, DUMMY--WHAT WOULD SPENCER DO?
HE WOULDN'T CRY LIKE A BABY...
NO... HE'S A HERO. JUST LIKE DADDY.
TIME TO BE BRAVE. TIME TO BE STRONG. TIME TO BE...
ASTOUNDING.
ALL RIGHT, ROACH--YOU'VE TAKEN YOUR BEST SHOT...
NOW IT'S MY TURN.
NEXT: NO MAN'S LAND!

CHAPTER THREE


Roach Riley
IN NOMINE PATRIS, ET FILII, ET SPIRITUS SANCTI.
STILL PRAYING FOR A RESCUE, FATHER?
'CUZ I THINK YOU AND I MIGHT BE OUTSIDE GOD'S CELL COVERAGE DOWN HERE.
WE ALL HAVE THINGS TO BELIEVE IN, ROACH. PEOPLE TO LIVE FOR.
I KNOW THINGS LOOK BAD... BUT THE HUMAN SPIRIT CAN DO INCREDIBLE THINGS TO SURVIVE.
YOU'RE RIGHT, PADRE. GOD, YOU'RE RIGHT.
BUT WE RAN OUT OF FOOD THREE WEEKS AGO. AND I'M JUST SO HUNGRY.
I'M SORRY--
OH GOD-- RRNFF--
I'M-- MFF--I'M SO SORRY--
WHUI
KRAK
THERE! WE FOUND 'EM!
RADIO BACK TO BASE--
WE GOT OURSELVES A SURVIVOR!


Human nature isn't pretty. It's driven by bad things— ugly things.
IT'S BAD OUT THERE, COMMISSIONER--AND PEOPLE ARE LOOKING TO CITY HALL FOR ANSWERS.
WE'RE GETTING REPORTS OF SNIPER FIRE, CAR BOMBS...HE EVEN DROVE A TANK THROUGH THE CITY COURTHOUSE, FOR CHRIST'S SAKE.
I HEAR YA-- I'VE BEEN HEARING THE CHATTER ALL NIGHT ON MY WRIST WALKIE.
BUT THERE'S A REASON I ALWAYS WEAR RED, MISTER MAYOR--IT'S SO THE BAD GUYS CAN SEE ME COMING.
POLICE
The truth is, we don't huddle around the light for charity, prosperity, or warmth.
WE'RE GONNA CATCH THIS "ROACH" SOON ENOUGH-- OR MY NAME ISN'T DAN TIFFANY.
No--the thing that holds society together... is fear.
Fear of loss. Fear of pain. And sometimes the most insidious fear of all...
SEE--WE EVEN GOT A CHOPPER BACK. PROBABLY MISSION ACCOMPLISHED ALREADY.
UH, SIR...
Fear of the unexpected.
I NEVER CALLED FOR A HELICOPTER.
WHA-
KROOM
POLICE

But at the end of the day, fear is just the shackles that hold us back.
=KHAGG=
NO...
Because that's the real truth about human nature--we're just like insects.
YOU S-SON OF A--
POLICE
We can survive darkness.
We can survive pain.
We can survive anything.
HEY, THAT'S A NICE SUIT YOU'RE WEARING...
Sometimes we just need a push.
MAKES FOR ONE HELL OF A TARGET.

They say war is hell.
If that's true...
whump
Then maybe this is where I belong.

The mission was supposed to be simple.
GASP!
We were supposed to move through the No Man's Land undetected.
Rumor is there's a new weapon in Berlin--a weapon that could change the war.
Our goal was to get there before the Nazis could finish it.
C'MON, LOCKE... GOTTA GET IT TOGETHER...
Like I said-- the mission was supposed to be simple.
SNAP
YOU HURT, SOLDIER?

Spencer & LOCKE
But no plan ever survives contact with the enemy.
THEN YOU'LL FIT RIGHT IN...
WE'RE ALL WOUNDED HERE.
BERLIN, HO!
WRITTEN BY DAVID PEPOSE
ART BY JORGE SANTIAGO JR.
COLORS BY JASEN SMITH
LETTERS BY COLIN BELL

"THERE'S ONLY ONE THING WORSE THAN KILLER MUTANT SNOWMEN...
"AND THAT'S NAZI KILLER MUTANT SNOWMEN."
BUT THAT'S WHY I'M HERE, CAPTAIN--TO GET YOU TO BERLIN IN ONE PIECE.
NAME'S SPENCER. COLONEL SPENCER PANTHERTON THE THIRD, TO BE PRECISE--HER MAJESTY'S ROYAL PANTHER DIVISION.
YEAH, SURE, SOUNDS FANCY--DID THE QUEEN SEND ANY ARTILLERY TO GO WITH THOSE CRUMPETS?
LOCKE...
NO...
WE KNEW YOU'D COME BACK.
BUT THAT'S MY BOY...
LOCKE! STAY WITH ME!
...ALWAYS COMING BACK TO THE SCENE OF THE CRIME.

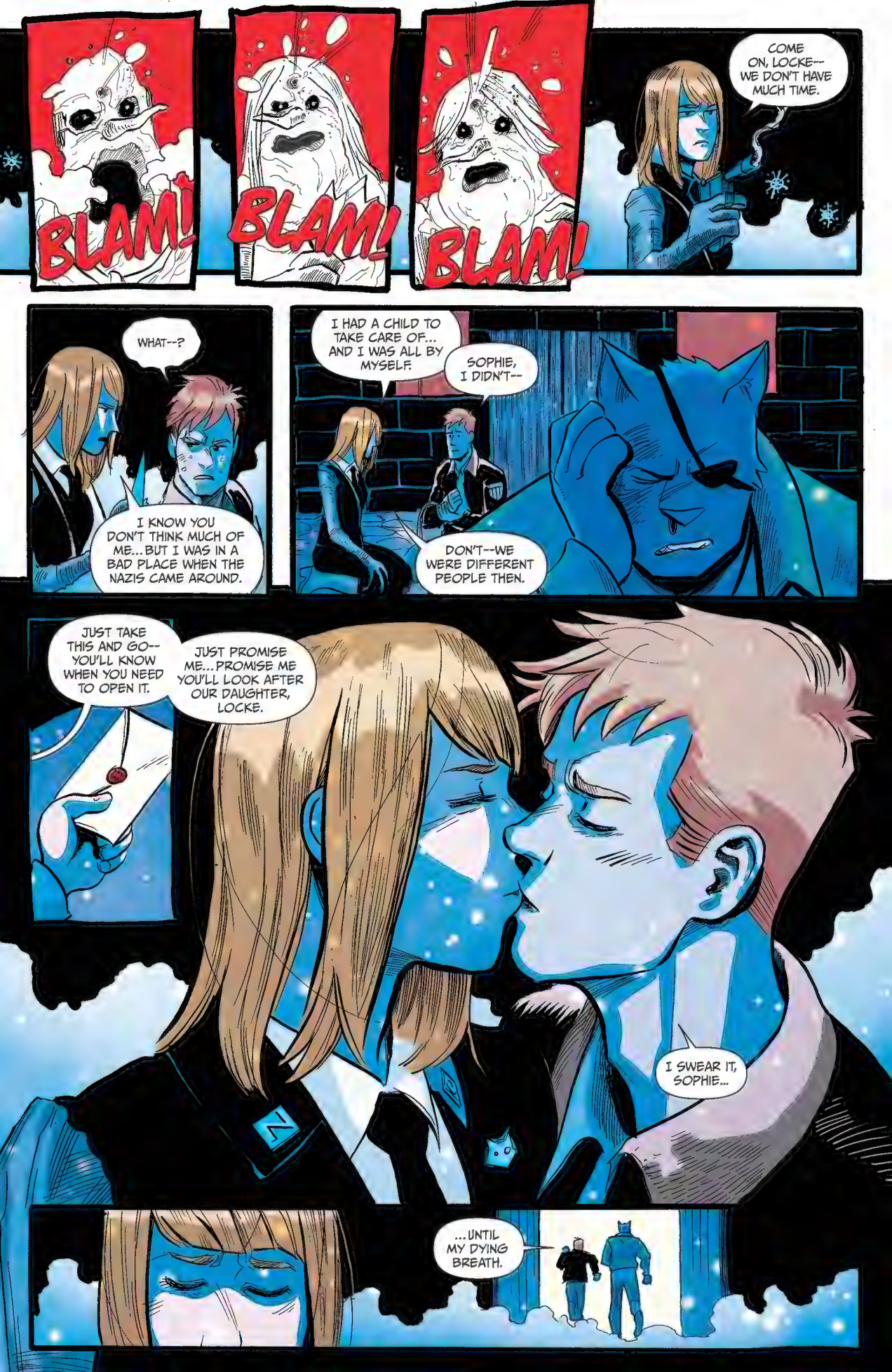
--REPORTS OF ROLLING BLACKOUTS AFTER AN EXPLOSION AT THE NATIONAL GRID POWER STATION NORTH OF THE CITY, WITH INJURY RATES CLIMBING AFTER TRAFFIC LIGHTS MALFUNCTION--
--FOLLOWING THE MAYOR'S ASSASSINATION, THE CITY COUNCIL HAS GONE INTO EMERGENCY SESSION, WITH COMPTROLLER HAL FORRESTER PROMISING A FIVE-POINT PLAN TO STEM THE CHAOS--
--IN OTHER NEWS, THERE HAVE BEEN REPORTS OF A LARGE BAT-LIKE CREATURE ON THE EAST SIDE... YOU DON'T THINK IT COULD BE--?
They say that evil has a face.
BETTER THAN A BOOT
And that if you stare into the darkness long enough, you can see that face looking right back at you.
But there's one other thing that people don't tell you.
It's that if evil has a face... that means it also has a butt.
A butt... that you can kick.
The name's Hero Jenkins--this here is my trusty sidekick, Mr. Rabbit. (He doesn't talk much.)
But you can call me...
CAPTAIN ASTOUNDING

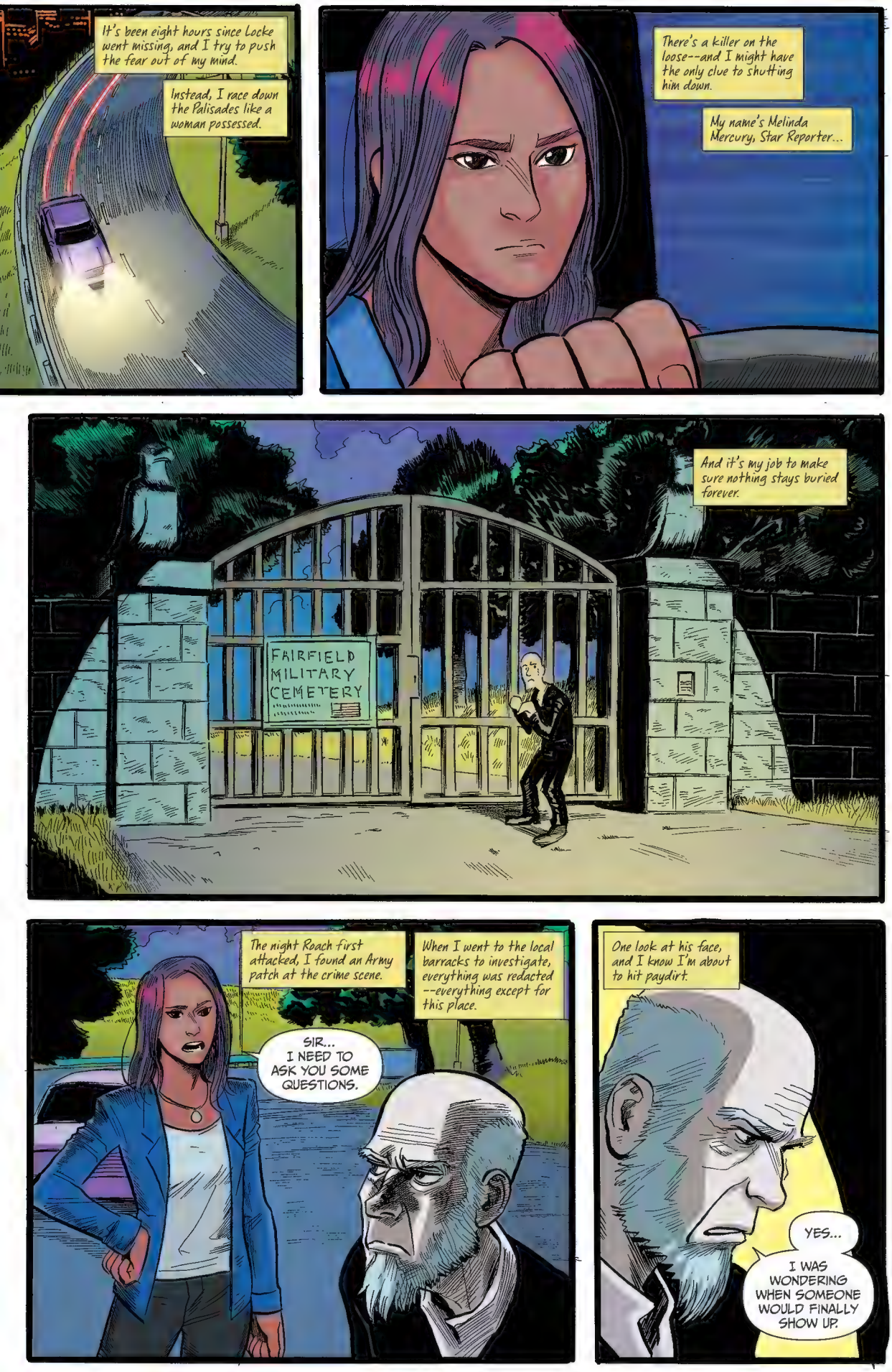
The agility of a panther! The cunning of another panther! The cuteness of yet another panther!
But that's not why Captain Astounding is prowling the sewers.
No--it's because she's been following this meanie all night!
He says his name is Roach--probably because he smells like one.
Normally, this would be bedtime--but I made my daddy a promise.
AND... VOILA!
FSSSH!
To be strong. To be brave. To be better than he was.
IT'S LIKE MAJOR ALWAYS SAID--YOU CAN'T TURN PEOPLE ON TO FREEDOM..

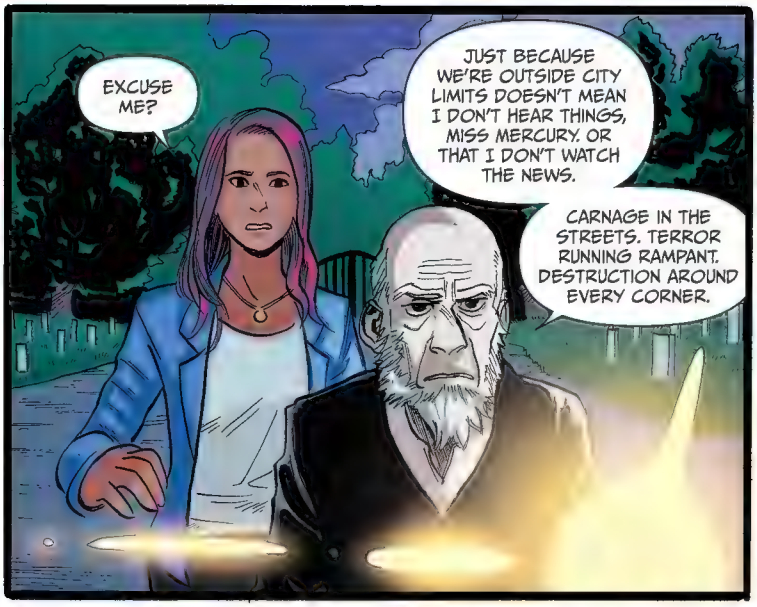
But Daddy never said there would be days like this.
...WITHOUT BRINGING OUT THE FIREWORKS FIRST.

LOCKE.
OPEN YOUR EYES.
My head rings as the darkness lifts. Her voice is unmistakable...
HHN...
THERE HE IS.
MY BRAVE SOLDIER.
Commandant Sophia Jenkman. She meant something to me once... a long time ago.
But what we had together became a lie the day she became a Nazi double agent.
I'M SORRY YOUR WAR HAS TO END LIKE THIS.
Gotta stall for time until Spencer can cut through the rope...
SHOULDA GUESSED YOU WERE BEHIND THIS, SOPHIE.
TELL ME-- HOW MANY PIECES OF SILVER DID ADOLF GIVE YOU TO SELL US OUT?
NOW, NOW, SON...
But then something comes that chills me to the bone.
IS THAT ANY WAY TO SPEAK TO A LADY?
My parents--long-dead evil brought back to slushy life by depraved Nazi science.

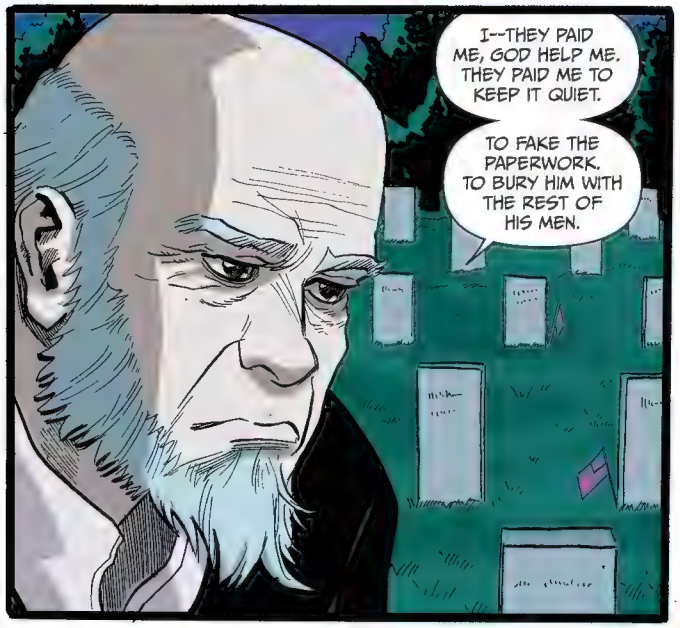
The cold saps my strength--like thousands of knives deep within my skin.
GAH--
THINK, SOPHIE! IS THIS THE SCUM YOU WANT TO SEE WIN THE WAR?
I'm running out of options... I'm running out of time.
IS THIS THE SLIME YOU WANT RULING OVER OUR DAUGHTER?!
Every second I fight, the more agonizing it gets to hold on.
LISTEN TO YOU, LOCKE--SO HOT-TEMPERED.
BUT TAKE IT FROM YOUR MOTHER AND I... IT'S SO MUCH BETTER NOT TO FEEL ANYTHING AT ALL.
SNAP
LOCKE!
Even when hope flares back to life...
YSSH!!
UNF!
NOT SO FAST, HAIRBALL!
It's a flame that immediately is gutted out.
Oh, God...I'm so sorry. Hero...
I'm
so
sorry


BLAM!
BLAM!
BLAM!
COME ON, LOCKE-- WE DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME.
WHAT--?
I KNOW YOU DON'T THINK MUCH OF ME... BUT I WAS IN A BAD PLACE WHEN THE NAZIS CAME AROUND.
I HAD A CHILD TO TAKE CARE OF... AND I WAS ALL BY MYSELF.
SOPHIE, I DIDN'T--
DON'T--WE WERE DIFFERENT PEOPLE THEN.
JUST TAKE THIS AND GO-- YOU'LL KNOW WHEN YOU NEED TO OPEN IT.
JUST PROMISE ME... PROMISE ME YOU'LL LOOK AFTER OUR DAUGHTER, LOCKE.
I SWEAR IT, SOPHIE...
...UNTIL MY DYING BREATH.


It's been eight hours since Locke went missing, and I try to push the fear out of my mind.
Instead, I race down the Palisades like a woman possessed.
There's a killer on the loose--and I might have the only clue to shutting him down.
My name's Melinda Mercury, Star Reporter...
And it's my job to make sure nothing stays buried forever.
FAIRFIELD MILITARY CEMETERY
The night Roach first attacked, I found an Army patch at the crime scene.
When I went to the local barracks to investigate, everything was redacted --everything except for this place.
SIR... I NEED TO ASK YOU SOME QUESTIONS.
One look at his face, and I know I'm about to hit paydirt.
YES... I WAS WONDERING WHEN SOMEONE WOULD FINALLY SHOW UP.

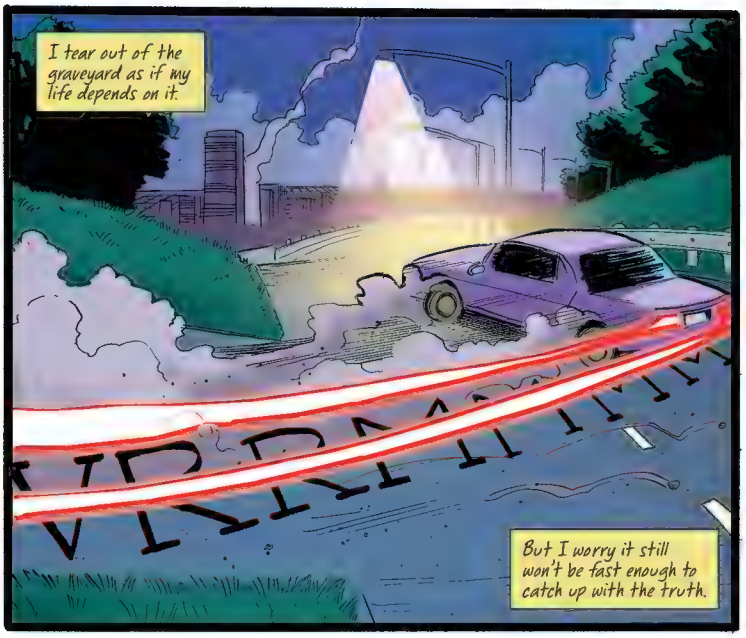

EXCUSE ME?
JUST BECAUSE WE'RE OUTSIDE CITY LIMITS DOESN'T MEAN I DON'T HEAR THINGS, MISS MERCURY. OR THAT I DON'T WATCH THE NEWS.
CARNAGE IN THE STREETS. TERROR RUNNING RAMPANT. DESTRUCTION AROUND EVERY CORNER.

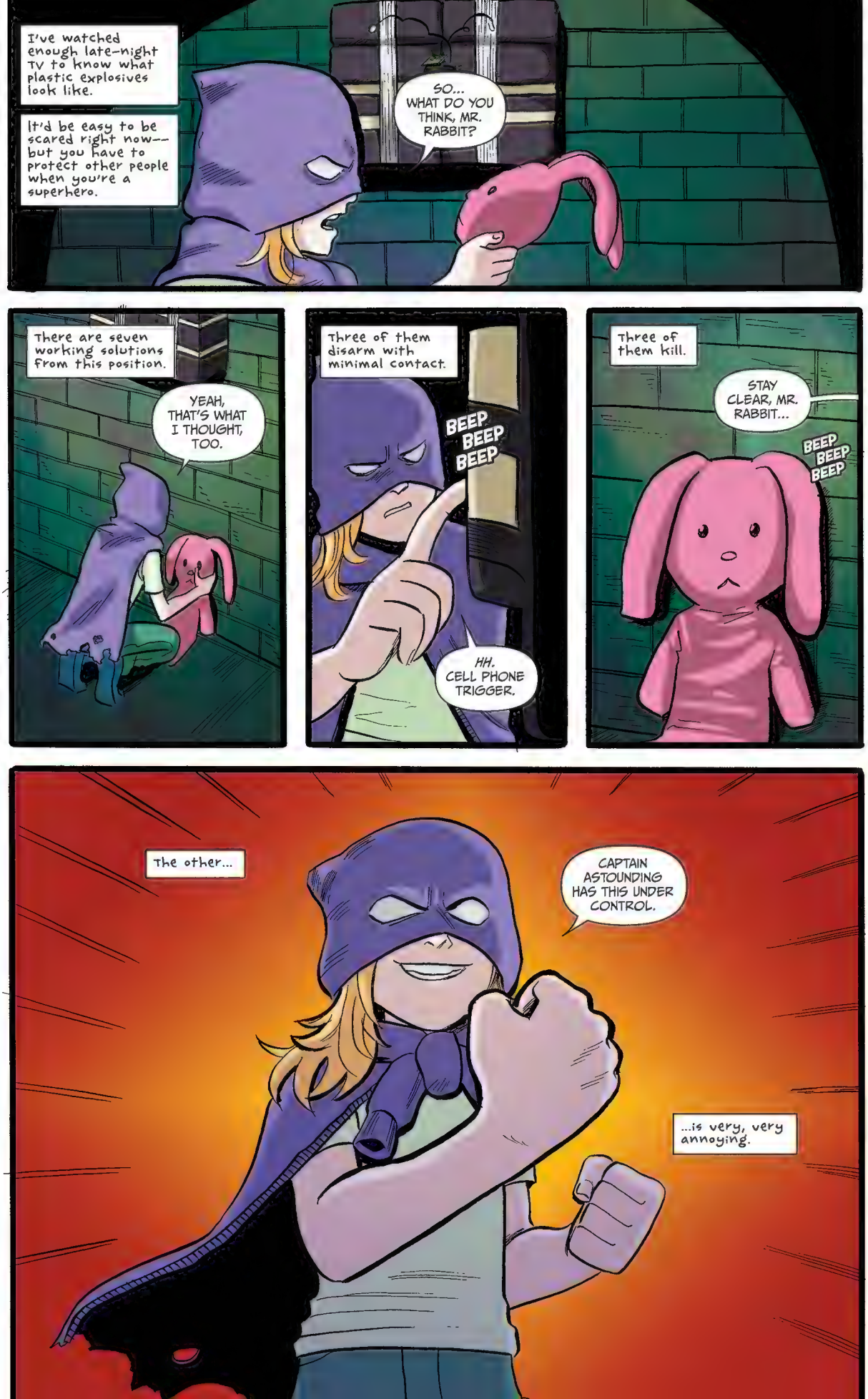
I KNOW-- AND IT ALL STEMS FROM A SOLDIER NAMED ROACH.
PLEASE... JUST TELL ME WHAT YOU KNOW. BEFORE THINGS GET WORSE.


I--THEY PAID ME, GOD HELP ME. THEY PAID ME TO KEEP IT QUIET.
TO FAKE THE PAPERWORK. TO BURY HIM WITH THE REST OF HIS MEN.

WHO?
YOU'LL KNOW IT WHEN YOU SEE IT.

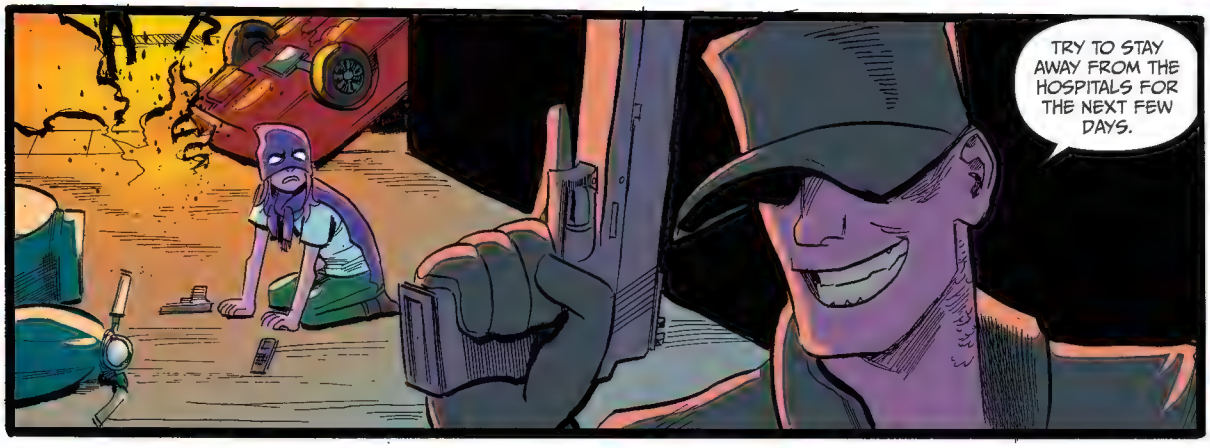
OH, GOD...


I tear out of the graveyard as if my life depends on it.
But I worry it still won't be fast enough to catch up with the truth.


I've watched enough late-night TV to know what plastic explosives look like.
It'd be easy to be scared right now--but you have to protect other people when you're a superhero.
SO... WHAT DO YOU THINK, MR. RABBIT?
There are seven working solutions from this position.
YEAH, THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT, TOO.
Three of them disarm with minimal contact.
BEEP BEEP BEEP
HH. CELL PHONE TRIGGER.
Three of them kill.
STAY CLEAR, MR. RABBIT...
BEEP BEEP BEEP
The other...
CAPTAIN ASTOUNDING HAS THIS UNDER CONTROL.
...is very, very annoying.

KLIK
HUH?
EXPECTING SOMETHING?
?
PARENTAL CONTROL LOCK, BOOGER-BREATH-- SIX WRONG PASSWORDS, AND YOUR PHONE'S A BRICK FOR THE NEXT TEN HOURS.
NOW WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO SAY FOR YOURSELF?
KLIK
HEH. YOU'RE A RIOT, KID...
BUT DID YOU FIND THE OTHER EIGHT?
FWABOOOOOOOOM
NO...
FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH... YOU GOT MORE GUTS THAN HALF THIS CITY COMBINED.

FIND ME IN A COUPLE YEARS IF EVER YOU WANT A REMATCH.
BUT UNTIL THEN...


TRY TO STAY AWAY FROM THE HOSPITALS FOR THE NEXT FEW DAYS.

The bombings get worse with every kilometer.
But we finally make it to Berlin.
V.L.E

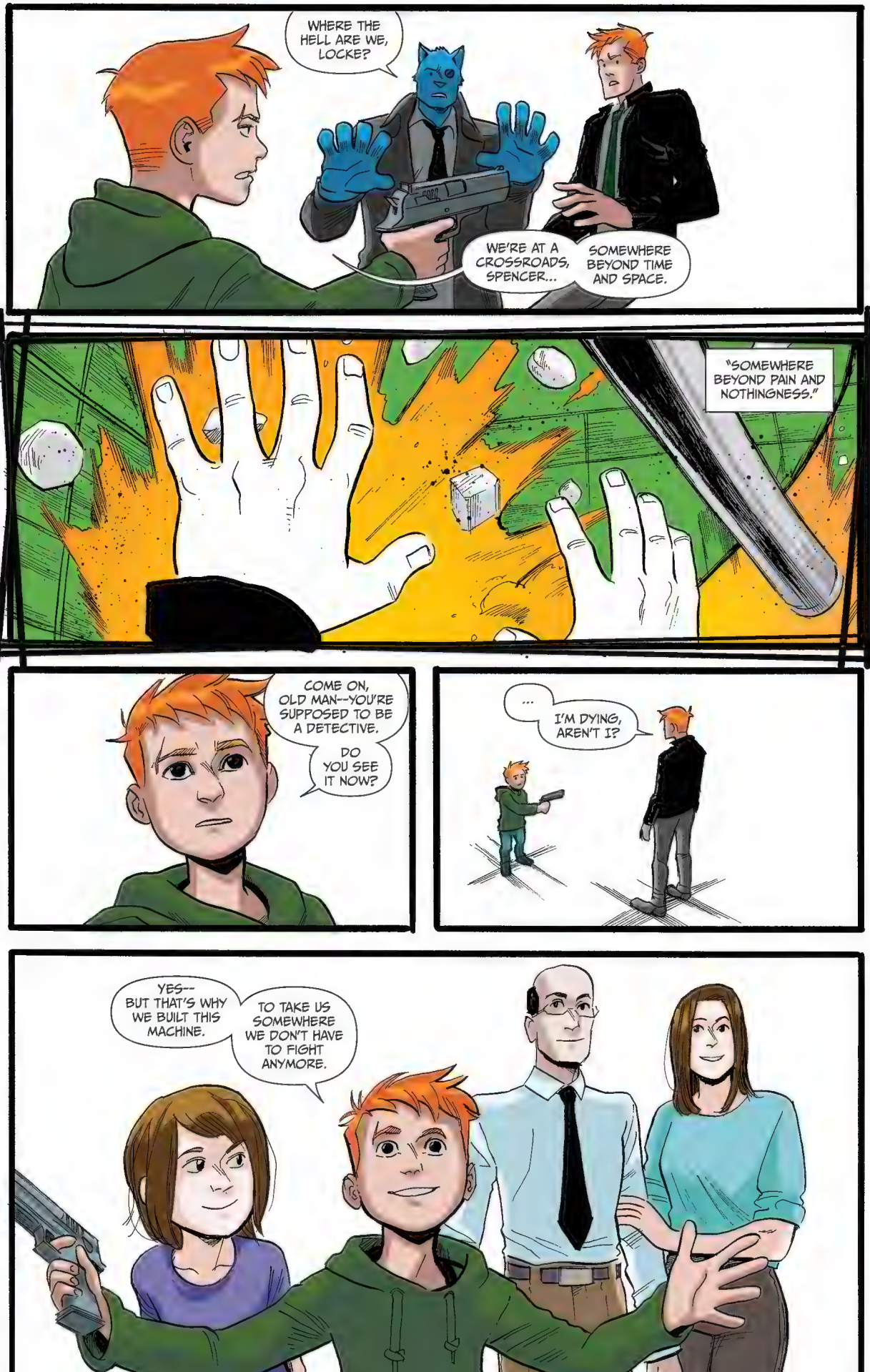
WHAM
LET'S MOVE, SPENCE! TIME TO SECURE THE--
Every step I've wondered what this weapon could possibly be...

But nothing could prepare me for this.
WHAT THE HELL IS THAT?
LOCKE... I REMEMBER NOW...
TIMS Mushine

"THAT'S OUR TIME MACHINE."

OH, SPENCER...
YOU ALWAYS WERE THE SMART ONE.

BUT THEN AGAIN...
I'VE ALWAYS BEEN MY OWN WORST ENEMY.

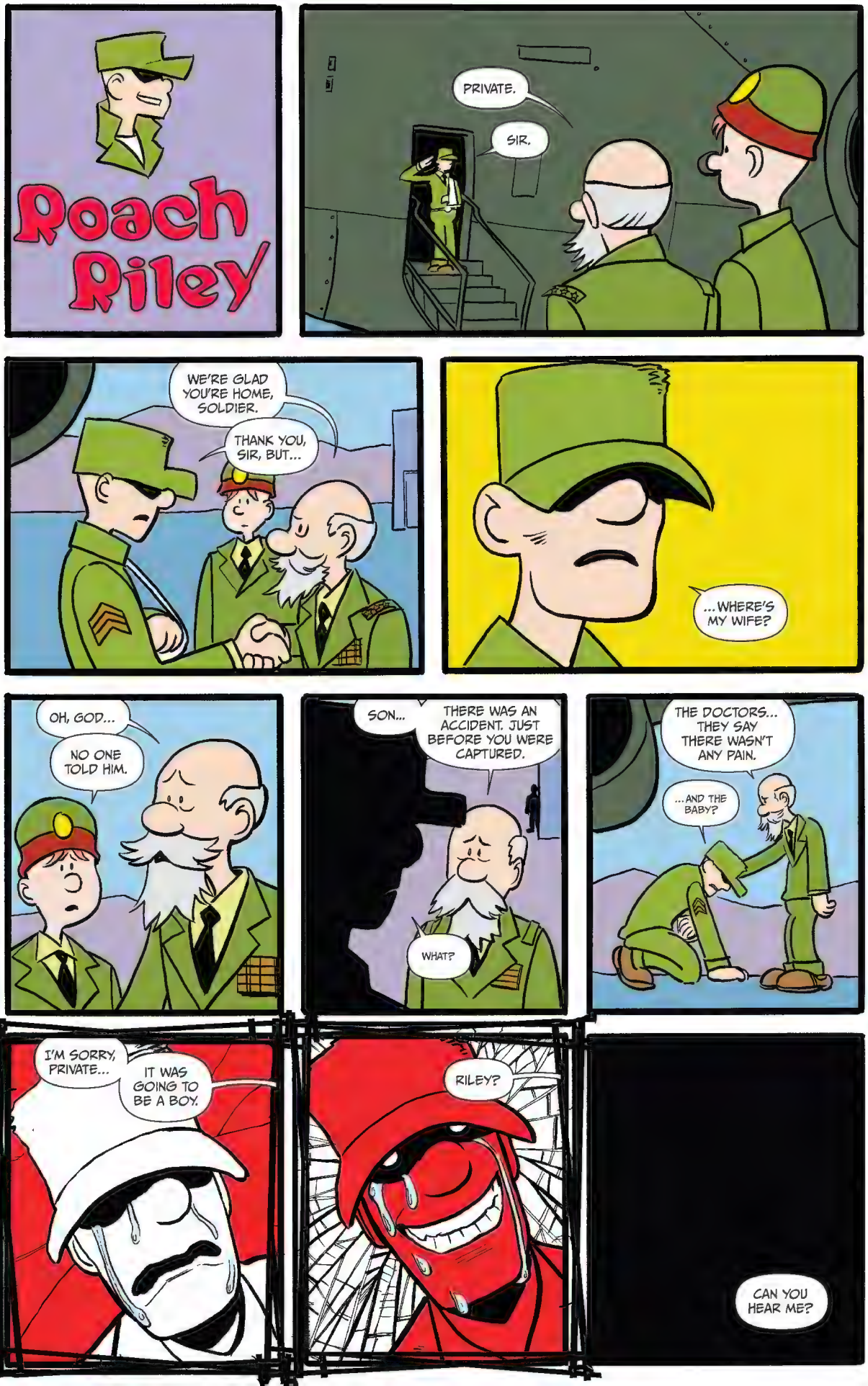

WHERE THE HELL ARE WE, LOCKE?
WE'RE AT A CROSSROADS, SPENCER...
SOMEWHERE BEYOND TIME AND SPACE.
"SOMEWHERE BEYOND PAIN AND NOTHINGNESS."
COME ON, OLD MAN--YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE A DETECTIVE.
DO YOU SEE IT NOW?
...
I'M DYING, AREN'T I?
YES-- BUT THAT'S WHY WE BUILT THIS MACHINE.
TO TAKE US SOMEWHERE WE DON'T HAVE TO FIGHT ANYMORE.

AH, KID... YOU THINK I HAVEN'T THOUGHT OF THAT A THOUSAND TIMES BEFORE?
I KNOW YOUR PAIN-- I KNOW YOUR SCARS.
BUT THERE'S SOMETHING YOU DON'T REALIZE JUST YET.
OH.
THERE'S A REASON THAT OUR SCARS HURT.
BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT REMINDERS DO.
I'M SORRY, KID-- THAT PAIN IS A PART OF ME. JUST LIKE SPENCER. JUST LIKE YOU.
AND EVEN IF WE COULD FIX IT ALL... EVEN IF WE COULD ERASE THE PAST...
IF WE DON'T REMEMBER OUR SCARS...
THEN EVERYTHING WE'VE SURVIVED LOSES ITS MEANING.
ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THIS, BUDDY? IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO CHANGE YOUR MIND.
I KNOW, SPENCE-- IT'D BE EASY JUST TO STAY HERE... TO STOP FIGHTING.
TO FINALLY FIND SOME PEACE.
TICK
BUT THEY ASKED ME TO CHOOSE BETWEEN ME AND MY DAUGHTER.
AND THAT'S NO CHOICE AT ALL.

I... I'M SO SORRY.
I TRIED SO HARD TO BE BIG AND BRAVE AND STRONG...
BUT I'M SCARED, DADDY. I'M SO SCARED...
KRKK
:GASP!:
RRR... IT'S ALL RIGHT, KIDDO...
I'M HERE NOW...
YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE AFRAID ANYMORE.

IT WAS YOU.
PRIVATE FIRST CLASS ROBERT "ROACH" RILEY. REPORTED KILLED IN ACTION WITH THE REST OF HIS PLATOON.
HE WAS YOUR BROTHER, LANA--AND YOU FAKED HIS DEATH... TURNED HIM AGAINST YOUR ENEMIES.
WHAT WAS YOUR ENDGAME--JUST A POWER PLAY TO FURTHER YOUR OWN POLITICAL ASPIRATIONS?
KLIK
NO...
HAL!
...IT WAS TO FURTHER MINE.
ROACH WAS A BROKEN MAN... BUT I GAVE HIM A NEW MISSION TO FOLLOW.
TOO BAD NEITHER OF YOU WILL LIVE TO SEE IT.
NEXT: APOCALYPSE NOW!

CHAPTER FOUR


Roach Riley
PRIVATE.
SIR.
WE'RE GLAD YOU'RE HOME, SOLDIER.
THANK YOU, SIR, BUT...
...WHERE'S MY WIFE?
OH, GOD...
NO ONE TOLD HIM.
SON...
THERE WAS AN ACCIDENT. JUST BEFORE YOU WERE CAPTURED.
WHAT?
THE DOCTORS... THEY SAY THERE WASN'T ANY PAIN.
...AND THE BABY?
I'M SORRY, PRIVATE...
IT WAS GOING TO BE A BOY.
RILEY?
CAN YOU HEAR ME?

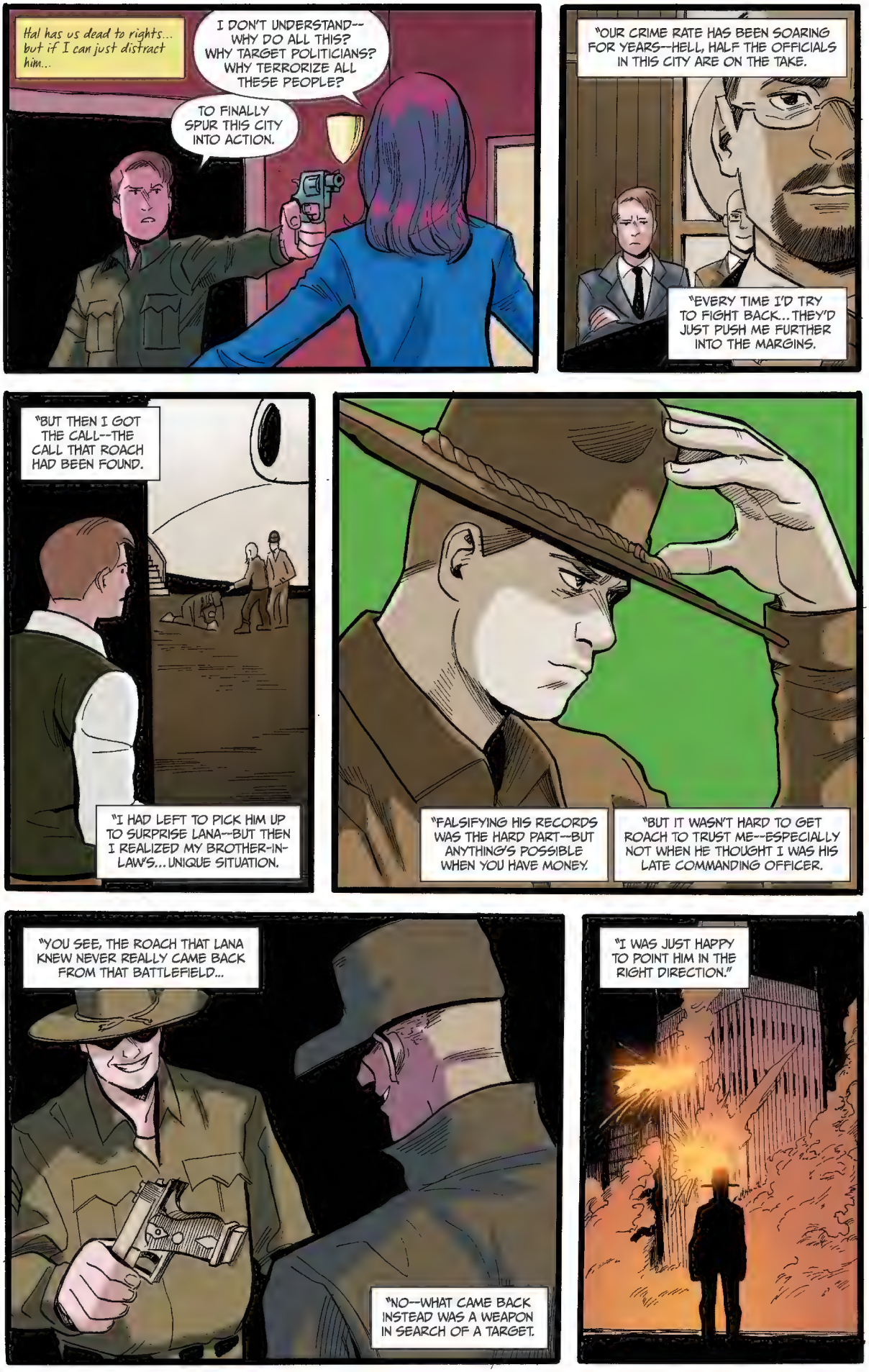
They say time heals all wounds.
THE KID'S FINALLY ASLEEP.
But take it from me--there are some scars that last a lifetime.
CHAK
GOOD.
IT'S BETTER SHE DOESN'T SEE THIS.
Broken bones. Bullet holes. Cigarette burns.
It's nothing compared to the horrors people carry underneath.
Every mark means something...every break shapes you into who you really are.
SINCE WHEN DO YOU SMOKE?
FELT LIKE THE RIGHT THING TO DO BEFORE FACING THE FIRING SQUAD.
Pain can turn people into heroes--or twist them into monsters.
BUT BEFORE WE MOVE, LOCKE...I HAVE TO KNOW...
ARE YOU READY TO DO WHAT IT TAKES TO FINISH THIS?
DADDY?
But what terrifies me the most... is not knowing if I'll be able to tell the difference.
DON'T FORGET THIS.
YOU NEED HIM MORE THAN ME RIGHT NOW.

Sometimes I still hear them.
Crying into the night.
24 HOUR EMERGENCY
Calling out for a man who wasn't there.
Sometimes the past is just the ghosts that haunt you.
TELL ME...
But other times, it's all the fuel you need to burn.
WHERE'S THE MATERNITY WARD?

YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE COME HERE, ROACH.
ALARM
DOWN
CHNN
HH.
BUT IT MAKES SENSE, IN A TWISTED SORT OF WAY--STRIKING PEOPLE AT THEIR MOST HOPEFUL.
HEH. JUST WHEN THINGS WERE STARTING TO GET BORING...
WE CAN SMELL YOUR FEAR, ROACH...
LUCKY FOR YOU, YOU'RE ALREADY IN THE HOSPITAL...
LET'S GO...
LET'S DO THIS!
FROOOOOOOSH
Y'KNOW, I'D ASK HOW YOU MADE IT OUT OF THAT CONSTRUCTION SITE...
BUT IT DOESN'T REALLY MATTER--WASN'T IT CURIOSITY THAT KILLED THE CAT?

YEAH...
BUT IT WAS SATISFACTION THAT BROUGHT HIM BACK.

There's a killer on the loose--and everyone's been too distracted by the body count to investigate the source.
NO... IT CAN'T BE...
Everyone except for me. My name's Melinda Mercury, Star Reporter--remember that if you see my obituary next week.
My investigation began when I found an Army patch at one of the crime scenes. It led me to a veterans' graveyard... where I learned someone faked Roach Riley's death.
I assumed the culprit was Roach's socialite sister, Lana Forrester--but it turns out hindsight is 20/20.
SO YOU'RE THE ONE BEHIND ALL THIS...
HAL FORRESTER--THE CITY COMPTROLLER HIMSELF.
YOU KNOW, I REMEMBER YOUR COVERAGE FROM THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL, MISS MERCURY...
Murder, politics, intrigue--I'm neck-deep in the story of a lifetime...
YOU'RE EVEN MORE AGGRAVATING IN PERSON.
That is, if I ever make it out of here in one piece.


Hal has us dead to rights... but if I can just distract him...
I DON'T UNDERSTAND--WHY DO ALL THIS? WHY TARGET POLITICIANS? WHY TERRORIZE ALL THESE PEOPLE?
TO FINALLY SPUR THIS CITY INTO ACTION.
"OUR CRIME RATE HAS BEEN SOARING FOR YEARS--HELL, HALF THE OFFICIALS IN THIS CITY ARE ON THE TAKE.
"EVERY TIME I'D TRY TO FIGHT BACK...THEY'D JUST PUSH ME FURTHER INTO THE MARGINS.
"BUT THEN I GOT THE CALL--THE CALL THAT ROACH HAD BEEN FOUND.
"I HAD LEFT TO PICK HIM UP TO SURPRISE LANA--BUT THEN I REALIZED MY BROTHER-IN-LAW'S...UNIQUE SITUATION.
"FALSIFYING HIS RECORDS WAS THE HARD PART--BUT ANYTHING'S POSSIBLE WHEN YOU HAVE MONEY.
"BUT IT WASN'T HARD TO GET ROACH TO TRUST ME--ESPECIALLY NOT WHEN HE THOUGHT I WAS HIS LATE COMMANDING OFFICER.
"YOU SEE, THE ROACH THAT LANA KNEW NEVER REALLY CAME BACK FROM THAT BATTLEFIELD...
"NO--WHAT CAME BACK INSTEAD WAS A WEAPON IN SEARCH OF A TARGET.
"I WAS JUST HAPPY TO POINT HIM IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION."

NO...NOT MY BROTHER...
YOU MANIAC...
ON THE CONTRARY, MISS MERCURY...
THERE'S A METHOD TO THE MADNESS.
AND THEY SHOULD BE ANNOUNCING IT RIGHT ABOUT... NOW.
KLIK
---IN A 3-2 VOTE, COMPTROLLER HAL FORRESTER WAS NAMED ACTING MAYOR DURING AN EMERGENCY CITY COUNCIL SESSION---
OH, GOD...
YOU STOLE THE ELECTION.
LIKE I SAID---I'M LOOKING TO CLEAN UP THIS CITY. AND NOW I FINALLY HAVE THE PLATFORM I NEED TO DO IT.
AND ONCE ROACH HAS SERVED HIS PURPOSE, I'LL BE THE HERO WHO ENDS HIS REIGN OF TERROR...
AFTER THE MURDER OF MY DEFENSELESS WIFE AND THE SNOOPING REPORTER, THAT IS.

THIS MEETING OF D.I.S.G.U.S.T. (DRIVE ICKY STUPID GIRLS UNDERNEATH SPEEDY TRAFFIC) IS NOW IN SESSION! GENERALISSIMO LOCKE HAS THE FLOOR.
TODAY'S FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS: WATER BALLOON STRATEGY.
Paff
RULE NUMBER ONE: NEVER TURN YOUR BACK ON AN ENEMY.
BLAM BLAM BLAM BLAM
MUSTMOVE FASTERMUSTMOVE FASTERMUSTMOVE FASTER
SHUT UP AND KEEP FIRING!
COME ON, LOCKE... I THOUGHT YOU'D HAVE UNDERSTOOD BY NOW...
FROOOOOOOO
I'M FASTER THAN YOU. STRONGER THAN YOU. BETTER THAN YOU.
WHAT COULD YOU POSSIBLY BRING TO STOP ME?
ME.
YOU LEAVE MY DADDY ALONE, BUGBREATH!
NYAAAARR!
SHNK

I feel Spencer tense up beside me--my heart drops into my stomach.
NO...
HERO!
My worst nightmare has come true...
REALLY, LOCKE? "HERO?"
THAT'S THE BEST NAME YOU COULD COME UP WITH?
And there's nothing I can do to stop it.
FEELS A LITTLE ON THE NOSE, DON'T YOU THINK?

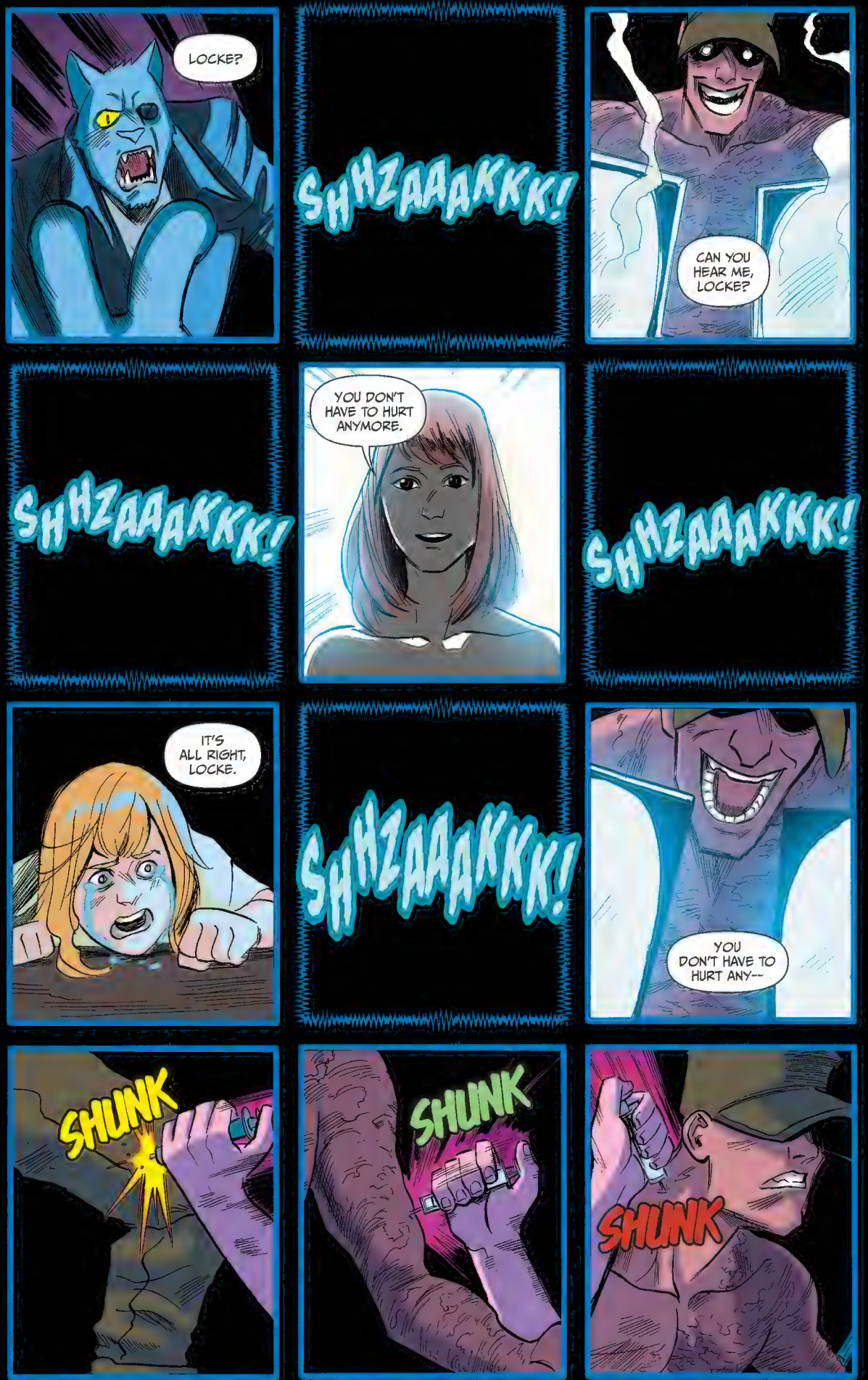
The blood roars in my ears. My heart pounds a mile a minute.
LOCKE-- LOOK...
SEE, THAT'S THE PROBLEM WITH HAVING KIDS THESE DAYS...
My daughter. My darling. My Hero.
IT'S ALMOST LIKE HAVING YOUR HEART RUNNING AROUND ON THE OUTSIDE.
But that's when time slows down. Instinct kicks in.
SO WHAT'S IT GONNA BE, LOCKE?
SHOULD I ROAST YOU NOW... OR DO YOU WANNA WATCH YOUR LITTLE GIRL DIE FIRST?
I only have one shot at this--
YEAH, SPENCE...
But one shot is all I need.
...I SEE IT.
KRR
94

The MRI screams like a wounded animal, pulling anything metal into its hungry maw.
HRRRN!
VMM
MM
It swallows my gun and my badge--a small price to pay for my daughter's life.
VMMMMM
JESUS!
POLICE
DETECTIVE
HERO! STAY WITH ME, BABY--
But one last roar rises from the machine.
KLK!
RRRRRRR...
NOT... FINISHED WITH YOU YET...
LOOK OUT!
And it's enough to set the whole world ablaze.
FWA
BOOOOMM
HOUR

This is it--I've run out of time. I'm sorry, Locke...but maybe I can give Lana a chance to escape this madman...
YOU KNOW, MISS MERCURY, I ALWAYS THOUGHT YOU HAD A WAY WITH WORDS...
ANYTHING YOU WANT TO SAY BEFORE I PULL THE TRIGGER?
HAL.
I WANT A DIVORCE.
OSCAR.
FETCH.
RROARRRR!
GAH!
CHOMP
I'M SORRY, MISTER MAYOR...
BUT THIS IS WHY YOU DON'T PICK A FIGHT WITH THE PRESS.

WHAK
WHUD
KRAK
GOOD BOY, OSCAR...
GOOD BOY.
STAY HERE, LANA--THE POLICE WILL BE HERE SHORTLY TO DEAL WITH HAL.
OF COURSE-- BUT WHAT ABOUT YOU?
I'VE GOT TO RUN...
--REPORTS OF EXPLOSIONS THAT HAVE ROCKED MERCY GENERAL HOSPITAL--
NEWS
"...I'VE GOT A RIDE TO CATCH... AND A STORY TO FINISH."

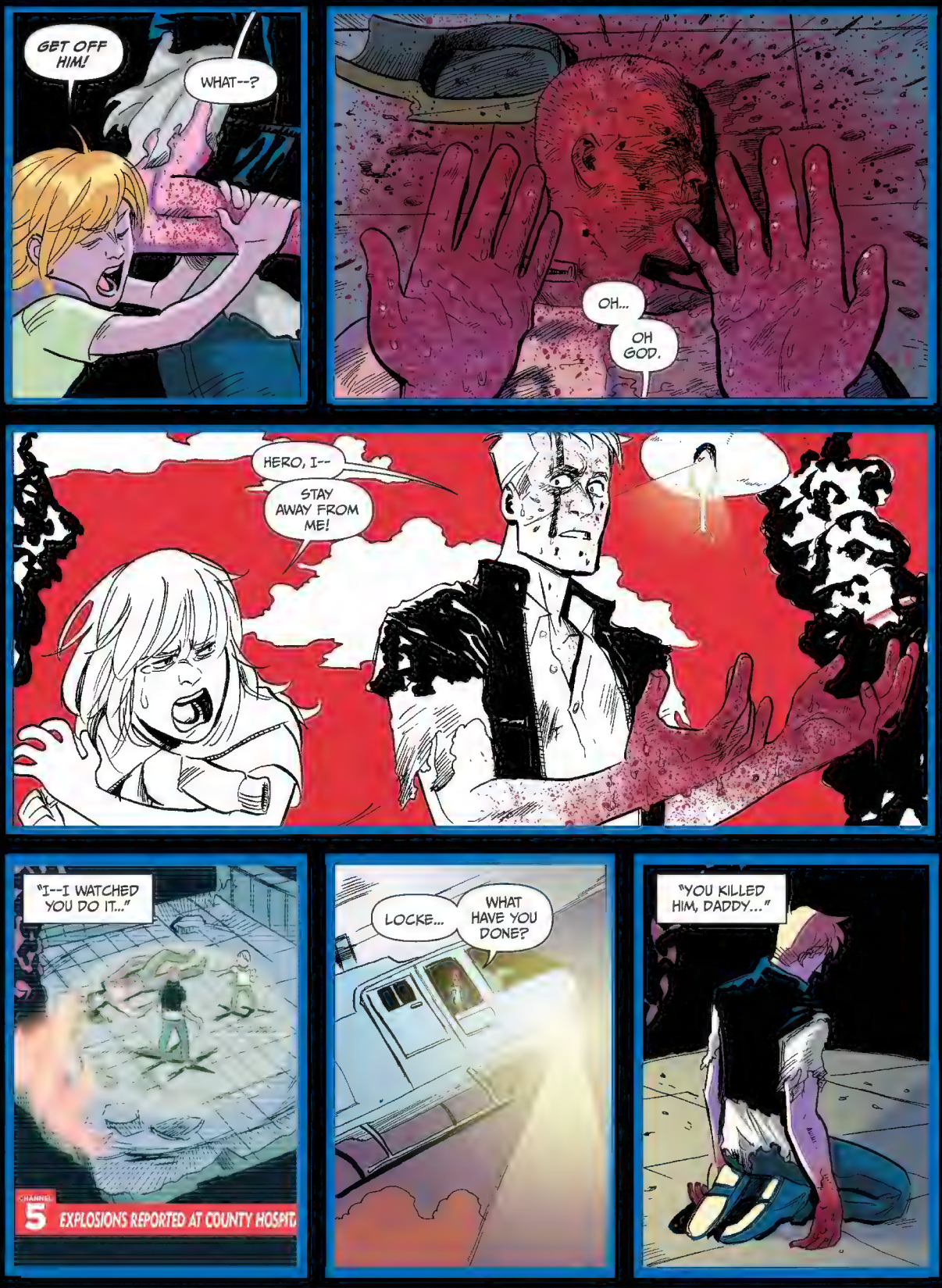
DO YOU EVER FEEL ANXIOUS ABOUT LIFE?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
LIKE FEELING AS THOUGH ONE WRONG CHOICE COULD BE YOUR LAST.
WELL, I TAKE COMFORT IN KNOWING THAT IT'S NEVER THE FALL THAT KILLS YOU...
IT'S THE LANDING.
Dove on Hero--took the brunt of the blast--
UGHHH... C'MON, SPENCE... GOTTA GET UP...
NNFFF... DID ANYBODY CATCH THE NUMBER OF THAT MACK TRUCK?
Jesus Christ--how is he still standing after all this--
DID YOU THINK WE WERE FINISHED YET, LOCKE?
His boot meets my ribcage, and the whole world goes black.
REMEMBER-- MY PAIN BECOMES MY STRENGTH!
GAK!
BUT YOU AND YOUR BLEEDING HEART...
If I listen closely... I can almost hear her calling my name.
LET'S SEE HOW YOU HANDLE A COUPLE HUNDRED VOLTS TO THE CHEST!
SHHZ AAKKK!


LOCKE?
SHHZAAAKKK!
CAN YOU HEAR ME, LOCKE?
SHHZAAAKKK!
YOU DON'T HAVE TO HURT ANYMORE.
SHHZAAAKKK!
IT'S ALL RIGHT, LOCKE.
SHHZAAAKKK!
YOU DON'T HAVE TO HURT ANY--
SHUNK
SHUNK
SHUNK

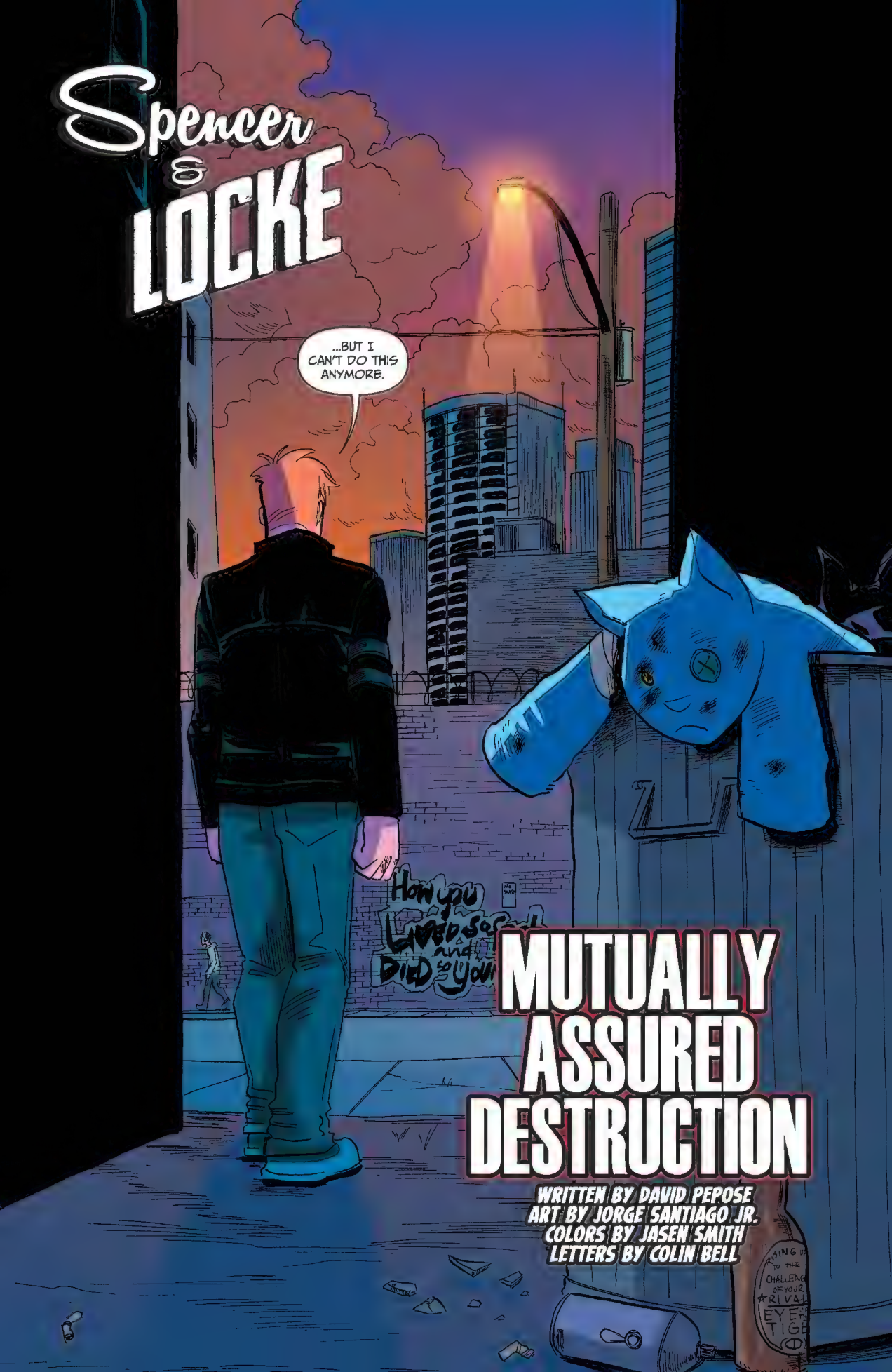
WHAT
WHAT DID YOU DO
HAVING TROUBLE STANDING?
THAT'S WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU'RE PUMPED FULL OF ANESTHESIA.
YOU ALWAYS TALKED ABOUT SCARS... ABOUT BEING DRIVEN BY SUFFERING.
BUT WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU CAN'T FEEL ANYTHING ANYMORE?
YOU THINK YOU KNOW PAIN, ROACH--BUT YOU'RE WRONG.
BECAUSE PAIN IS MY OLDEST FRIEND.

HEH... SO WHAT'S NEXT, LOCKE? AM I UNDER ARREST?
YOU KNOW-- HRRR--HOW WELL THAT WORKED OUT LAST TIME.
YOUR PRISONS CAN'T HOLD ME FOREVER-- I'LL ONLY COME BACK STRONGER THAN EVER.
"MAYBE I'LL EVEN PAY THAT DAUGHTER OF YOURS A LITTLE VISIT WHEN I GET OUT."
Y'KNOW, I WAS GONNA HAVE A BABY ONCE.
AND WHEN I LOST HIM... IT WAS THE WORST DAY OF MY LIFE.
SO YOU BETTER GET TO PULLING THE TRIGGER, LOCKE...
BECAUSE IF YOU DON'T...
ONE DAY I'M GONNA MAKE YOU...JUST LIKE ME.

...
NO.
I'M NOT GONNA GIVE YOU WHAT YOU WANT.
I KNOW YOUR SECRET, ROACH--YOU NEVER DID THIS TO PROVE A POINT.
YOU DID IT TO SHARE YOUR PAIN... BECAUSE IF EVERYONE ELSE WAS IN AGONY, MAYBE YOU WOULDN'T HURT SO MUCH ANYMORE.
FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH, ROACH--I KNOW WHAT IT FEELS LIKE. TO WANT TO ESCAPE.
BUT YOU'RE GONNA HAVE TO LIVE WITH YOUR SCARS JUST LIKE THE REST OF US.
C'MON, SPENCE--LET'S GO HOME.
I'M SORRY, LOCKE--BUT I MADE A PROMISE TO KEEP HERO SAFE.
AND A PANTHER--
NO!
WHUD!
ALWAYS--
STOP IT!
KRAK!
KEEPS HIS PROMISES!
STOP IT, DADDY!
KRNCH!


GET OFF HIM!
WHAT--?
OH...
OH GOD.
HERO, I--
STAY AWAY FROM ME!
"I--I WATCHED YOU DO IT..."
CHANNEL 5
EXPLOSIONS REPORTED AT COUNTY HOSPITA
LOCKE...
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?
"YOU KILLED HIM, DADDY..."
"...NOW YOU'RE JUST LIKE HIM."

YOU USED ME.
PLEASE. WE USE EACH OTHER.
NO--- YOU TOOK OVER MY BODY, SPENCE.
YOU KILLED ROACH ON LIVE TELEVISION, AND YOU USED ME TO DO IT.
I DID WHAT HAD TO BE DONE.
WHAT HAD TO BE---?
MY LIFE AS A COP IS OVER! MELINDA IS GONE! MY OWN DAUGHTER WON'T EVEN LOOK ME IN THE EYE, DAMMIT!
BUT HERO'S SAFE--- AND THAT'S ALL THAT MATTERS.
I DID IT FOR YOU, LOCKE---JUST LIKE I ALWAYS DO. LIKE I'VE CARRIED YOU THROUGH EVERYTHING.
YEAH... AND LOOK WHERE THAT'S GOTTEN US.
DON'T YOU TURN YOUR BACK ON ME, LOCKE!
YOU NEED ME!
I'M SORRY, SPENCE...


Spencer & LOCKE
...BUT I CAN'T DO THIS ANYMORE.
MUTUALLY ASSURED DESTRUCTION
WRITTEN BY DAVID PEPOSE
ART BY JORGE SANTIAGO JR.
COLORS BY JASEN SMITH
LETTERS BY COLIN BELL

COVER GALLERY

ISSUE #1 VARIANT BY MAAN HOUSE

ISSUE #1 VARIANT BY JOE MULVEY

ISSUE #2 VARIANT BY MAAN HOUSE

ISSUE #2 VARIANT BY JOE MULVEY

ISSUE #3 VARIANT BY MAAN HOUSE

ISSUE #3 VARIANT BY JOE MULVEY

ISSUE #4 VARIANT BY MAAN HOUSE

ISSUE #4 VARIANT BY JOE MULVEY

SPECIAL DELIVERY

D'ARGH-EMPIRE

DR. VINK

WITH A VA-VA-VA

A DR. VINK READER'S COLLECTION

SINGLE ISSUE SCANS/RIPS COLLECTED
INTO THEIR RESPECTIVE VOLUMES

...AND I AM NOT A NUT BAG